それがし乞食にあらず

それがし乞食にあらず

Proud to be a samurai even though I'm destitute.
HIRATA Hiroshi Chronologies 1970-1971

それがし乞食にあらず 平田弘史 作品集

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青林工藝舎

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それがし乞食にあらず

平田弘史

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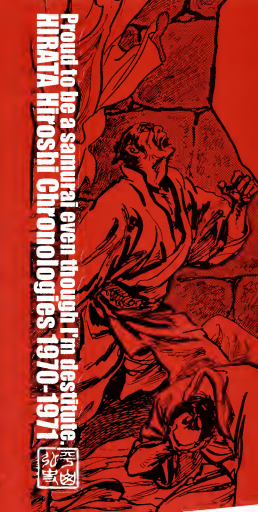

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「まったく古びていない、まさに日本的な美学。やっぱり天才ですね」

解説 **石子順造**

「平田弘史論」に代わる同氏評論「作品

1970～71年に発表された代表作に未収録作(81年)をボーナス収録!

平田弘史 Ⅳ

青林工藝舎

A5判並製・本文約二〇〇頁・各巻予価・六〇〇～七〇〇円

ぜひ、みんなという通り！

『平田弘史Chronologies』

六十年代後半より七十年代後半の間に各誌に発表されたオリジナル短編をコンパイル、原稿所在不明のため無念の単行本未収録となっていた作品も初出誌より執念のリマスター、各巻それぞれにボーナス収録！　海外翻訳版も大反響、再灰燃え上がる時代劇画界の巨人に刮目せよ！

それがし食いあらず

Proud to be a samurai even though I'm destitute.

HIRATA Hiroshi Chronologies 1970-1971

SEIRINKOGEISHA

それがし乞食にあらず

平田弘史傑作選　昭和四五年～四六年

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◆初出一覧◆

「我れ枯るるとも」
「サンデー毎日増刊号　劇画＆マンガ2」(毎日新聞社)
1970年4月

「それがし乞食にあらず」
「サンデー毎日増刊号　これが劇画だ」(毎日新聞社)
1970年2月

「仕末妻」
「現代コミック」(双葉社)1970年4月9・23日号
(翌71年「漫画フレッシュ」12月号掲載時に加筆・増ページ)

「秘砲抱え大筒」
「サンデー毎日増刊号　劇画＆マンガ3」(毎日新聞社)
1970年8月

「不承知槍」
「別冊アサヒ芸能　特選コミック劇場」(徳間書店)
1971年7月

「誰も戦い望まぬけれど」
「別冊歴史読本21　決断！運命の関ヶ原」(新人物往来社)
1981年10月

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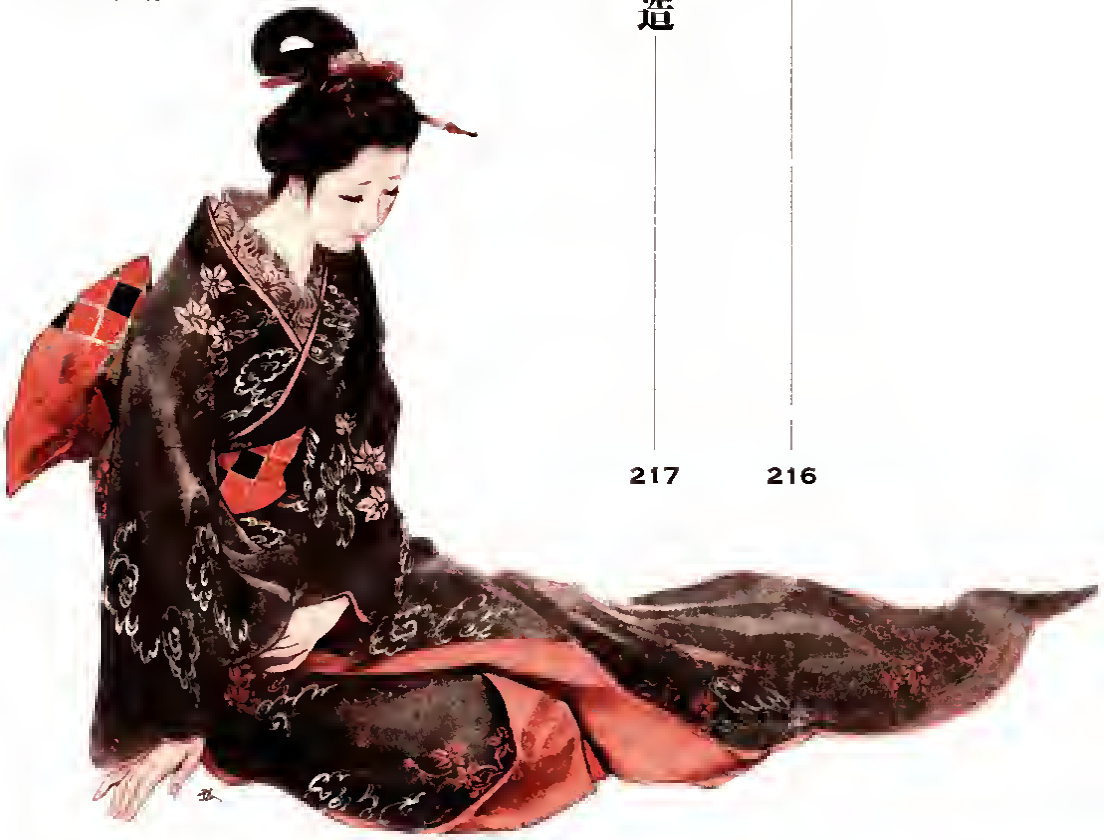


装丁……ひよこデザイン

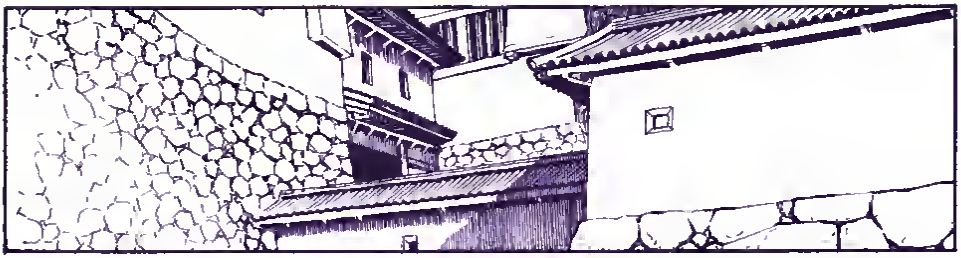
EVEN IF I AM TO WITHER

WAIT!
YOU'RE ...!
Ohh!

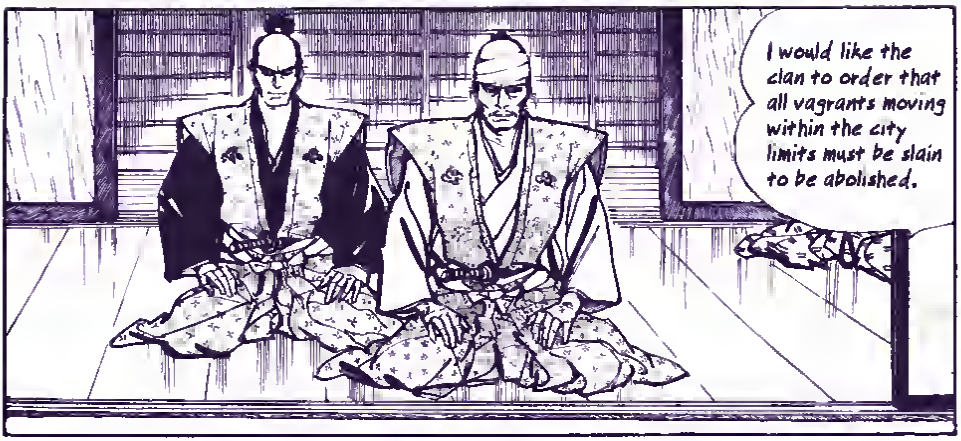
That is my son! He is my son, who I was separated with long ago during the war in Osaka!
Wait!
Out of the way, old man!
DON'T TAKE AN-OTHER STEP FOR-WARD!
That doesn't change the fact that he is a vagrant. Now move.
ドガッ
If you intend on killing him no matter what, then I will have no mercy!

WAIT!

SENSEI!!
AHH!
What's wrong?
What?
I just saw the Great Sensei and a headless corpse in the entranceway!
MMM...

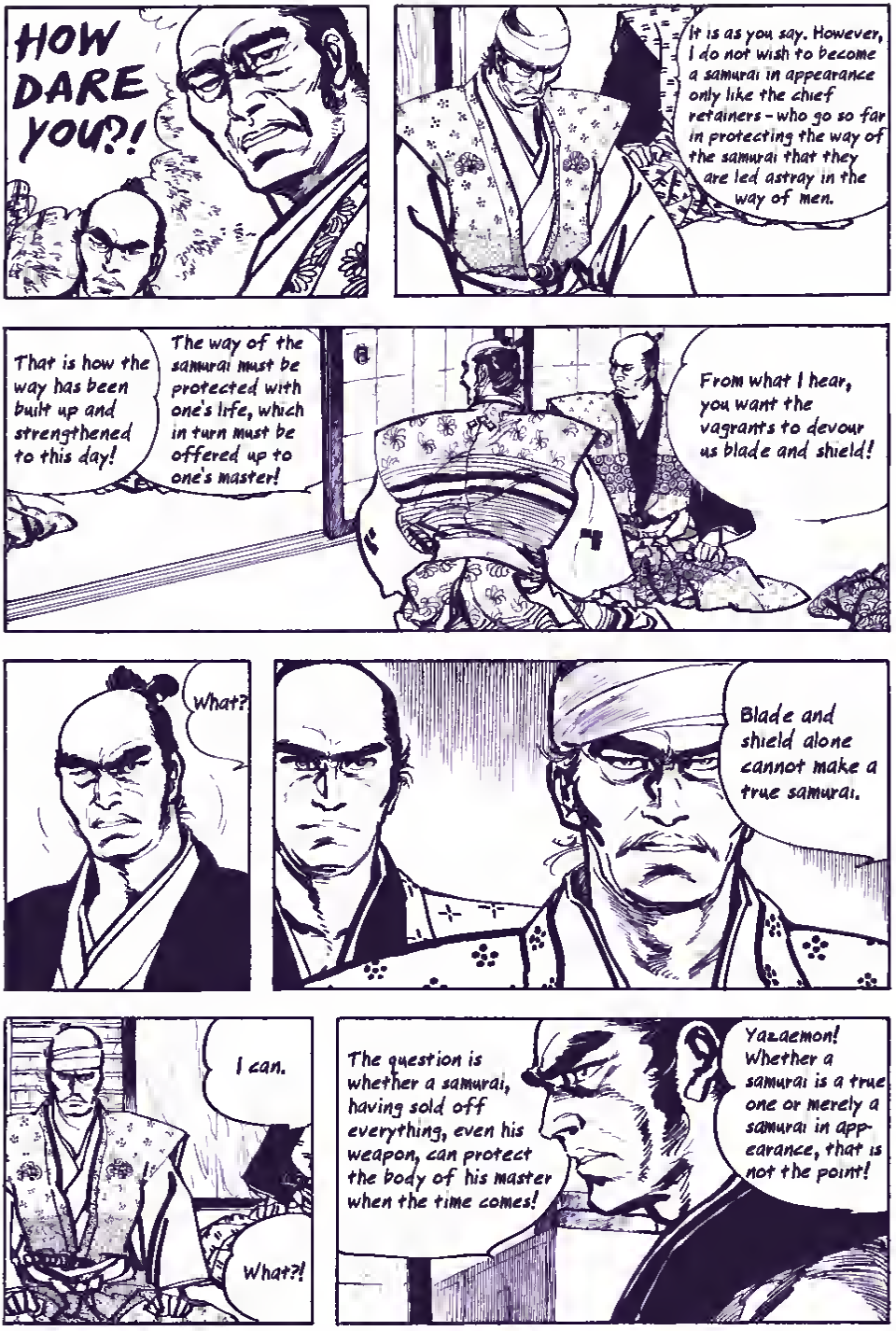


Tell us the details. Briefly, that is...


I would like the clan to order that all vagrants moving within the city limits must be slain to be abolished.

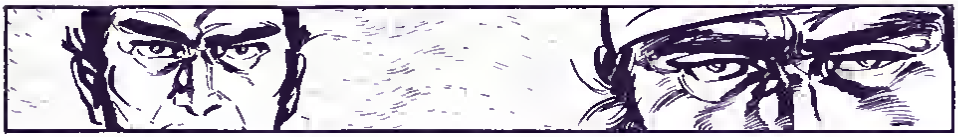
If you intend to deal with them all yourselves, then we may be able to accept your request, however.
There have been at least three clan officials who have suffered damages as a result of either robbery, gang violence, or rape by vagrants.

Since the war in Osaka ended, and various clans were dismantled, the number of wandering vagrants has greatly increased. Just the number of those fleeing from Edo alone easily reaches two or three hundred.
Kasai!
If it will spare innocents from bloodshed, then I would prefer that!
You think someone who is suffering to take care of merely thirty men is capable of such a task?!
Yazae-mon!
I cannot tolerate the high officials who give "a lack of funds" as the reasons for their slaying! These men are not animals!
I have no choice.
Your selfish act of deciding to protect one of the very men that clan warriors have been ordered to slay without separating emotion from your work, and then coming in here and mouthing off like some high and mighty official is absolutely the extremity of audacity!
Despite being a samurai whose job is to serve only your lord, you chose to willfully adopt a child and poured all of your efforts into raising it – a deed that can only be described as slighting your master!

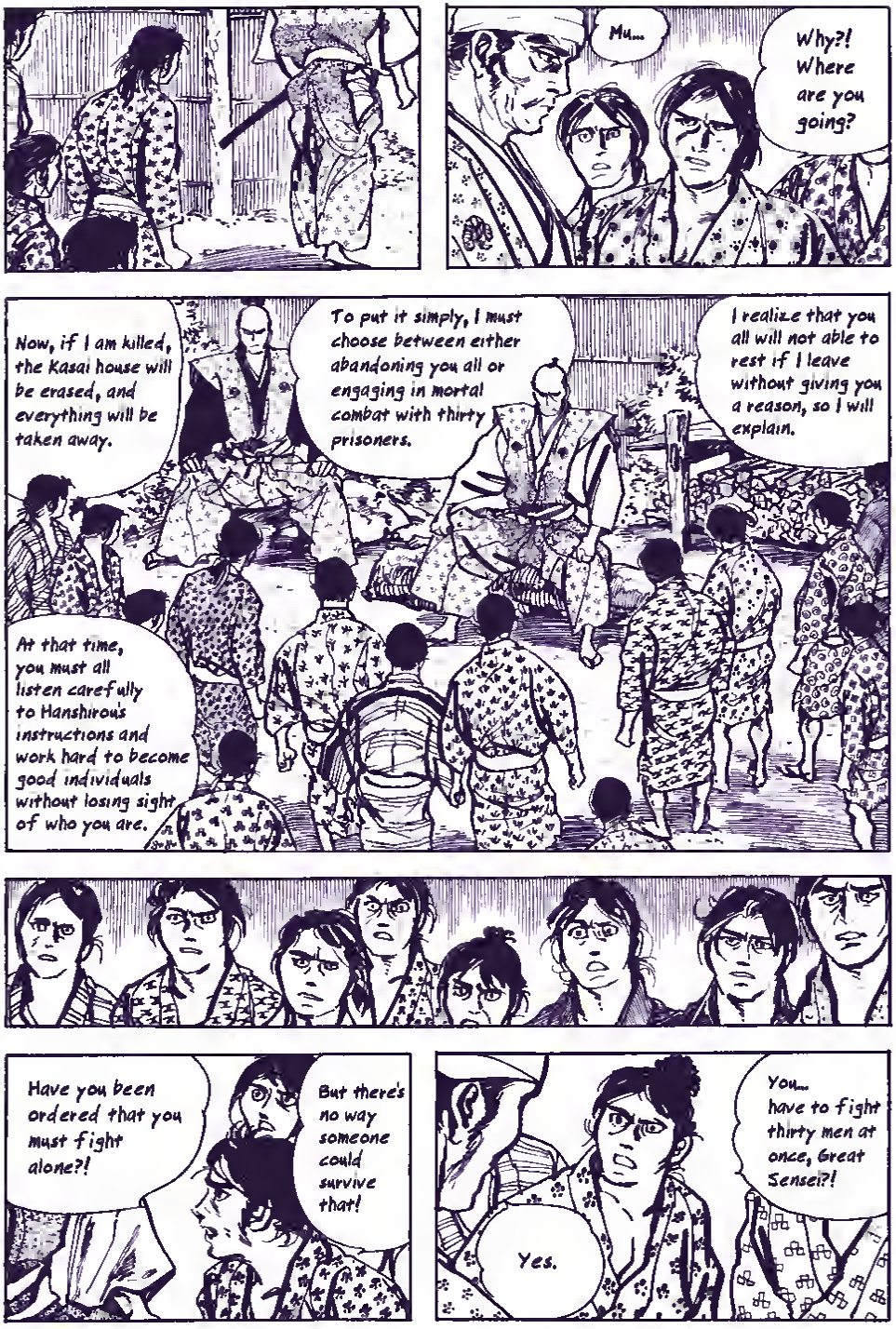

HOW DARE YOU?!
It is as you say. However, I do not wish to become a samurai in appearance only like the chief retainers - who go so far in protecting the way of the samurai that they are led astray in the way of men.
That is how the way has been built up and strengthened to this day!
The way of the samurai must be protected with one's life, which in turn must be offered up to one's master!
From what I hear, you want the vagrants to devour us blade and shield!
What?
Blade and shield alone cannot make a true samurai.
I can.
What?!
The question is whether a samurai, having sold off everything, even his weapon, can protect the body of his master when the time comes!
Yazaemon! Whether a samurai is a true one or merely a samurai in appearance, that is not the point!

Tomorrow I want you to arm the thirty prisoners in your possession with weapons and armor and then fight them as you would an enemy.
Interesting. I might as well have you demonstrate some proof of that, then.

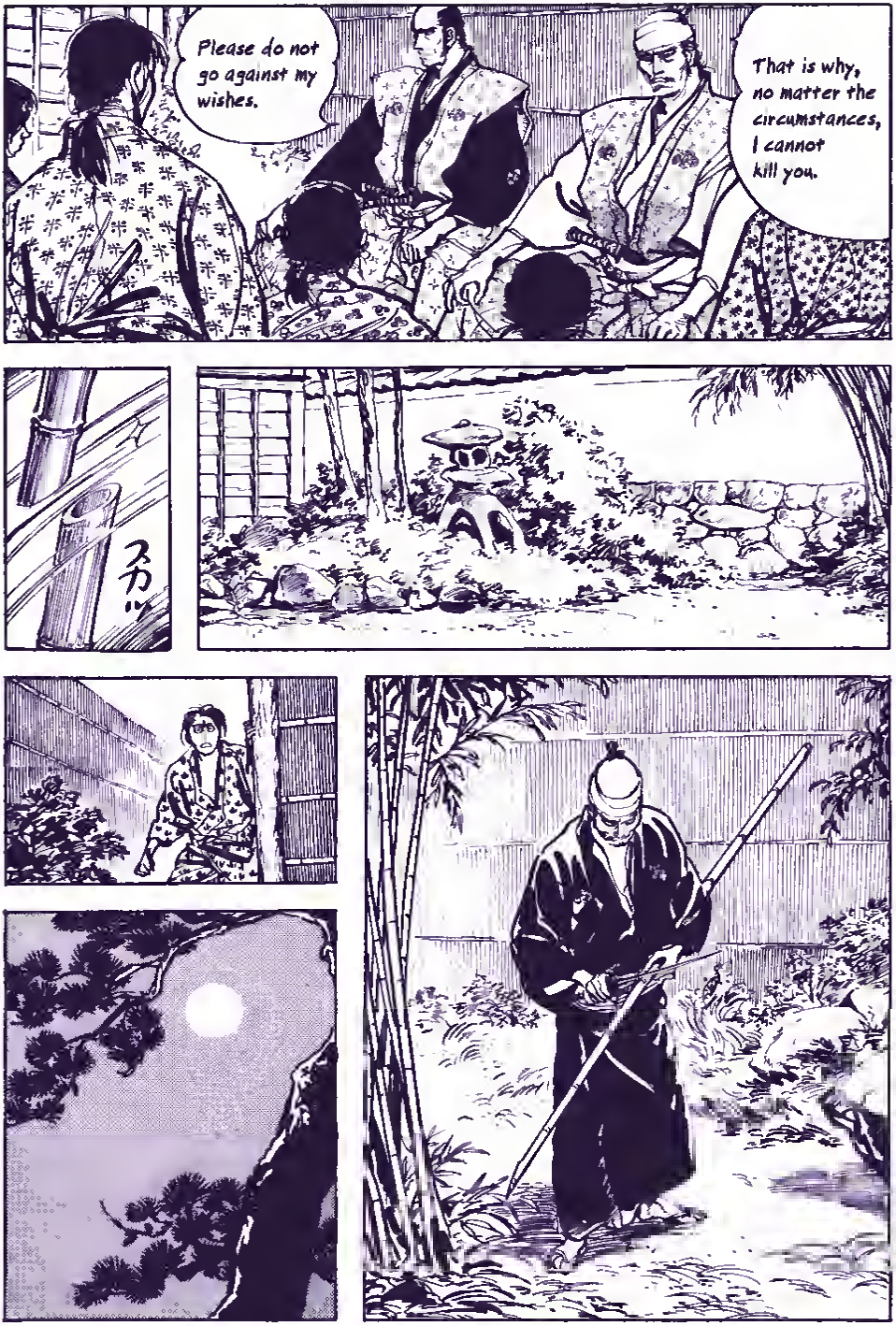
I assume you are in full understanding of this fact.
If you can manage to burst the straw dolls your master has set up for you, then there is a possibility that the Kasai house may escape its imminent disassembling.



萬西
What... happened, sensei?
!
Eh?
I must now bid farewell to you all.

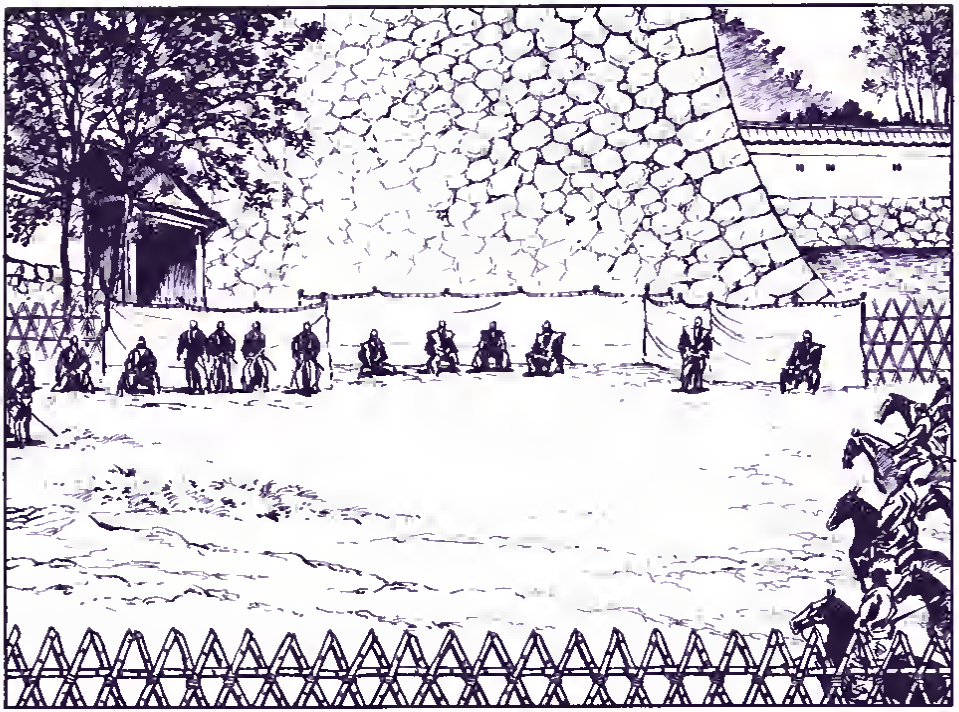

Mu...
Why?! Where are you going?
Now, if I am killed, the Kasai house will be erased, and everything will be taken away.
To put it simply, I must choose between either abandoning you all or engaging in mortal combat with thirty prisoners.
I realize that you all will not able to rest if I leave without giving you a reason, so I will explain.
At that time, you must all listen carefully to Hanshirou's instructions and work hard to become good individuals without losing sight of who you are.
Have you been ordered that you must fight alone?!
But there's no way someone could survive that!
You... have to fight thirty men at once, Great Sensei?!
Yes.

If possible, even we would...!
Why don't you go, Young Sensei?!
Then...!
No, that isn't the case.
Alright! Let's beat every last one of those bastards down!
Yeah! Let's do it!
Right, everyone?!
No, wait, wait!
The only reason I entered you all into this family was to save your lives, and nothing more!
I don't want you to misunderstand. I don't feel even the least bit of joy after hearing such cries...


Please do not go against my wishes.
That is why, no matter the circumstances, I cannot kill you.
スカッ

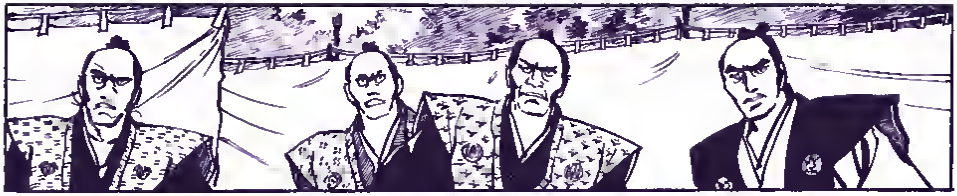
MU
ヴォン
チュン
You can't possibly be thinking of doing this alone, can you? Not out of filial compassion, but in order to save the home and finances of your children...
.....
I won't stop you.

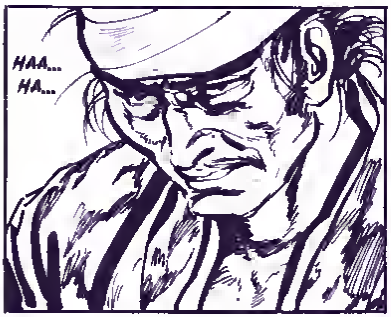
Mu...
If you're that prepared, then follow us.
.....
No matter what you say, we won't leave. We're doing this.

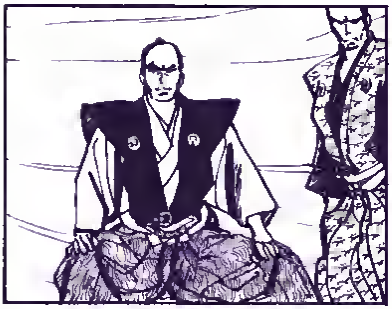


You gave those vagrant devils bamboo spears? What is the meaning of this?!
Kasai!
but men.
My weapons are not blade and shield,
OHHHH!
WHAT?!

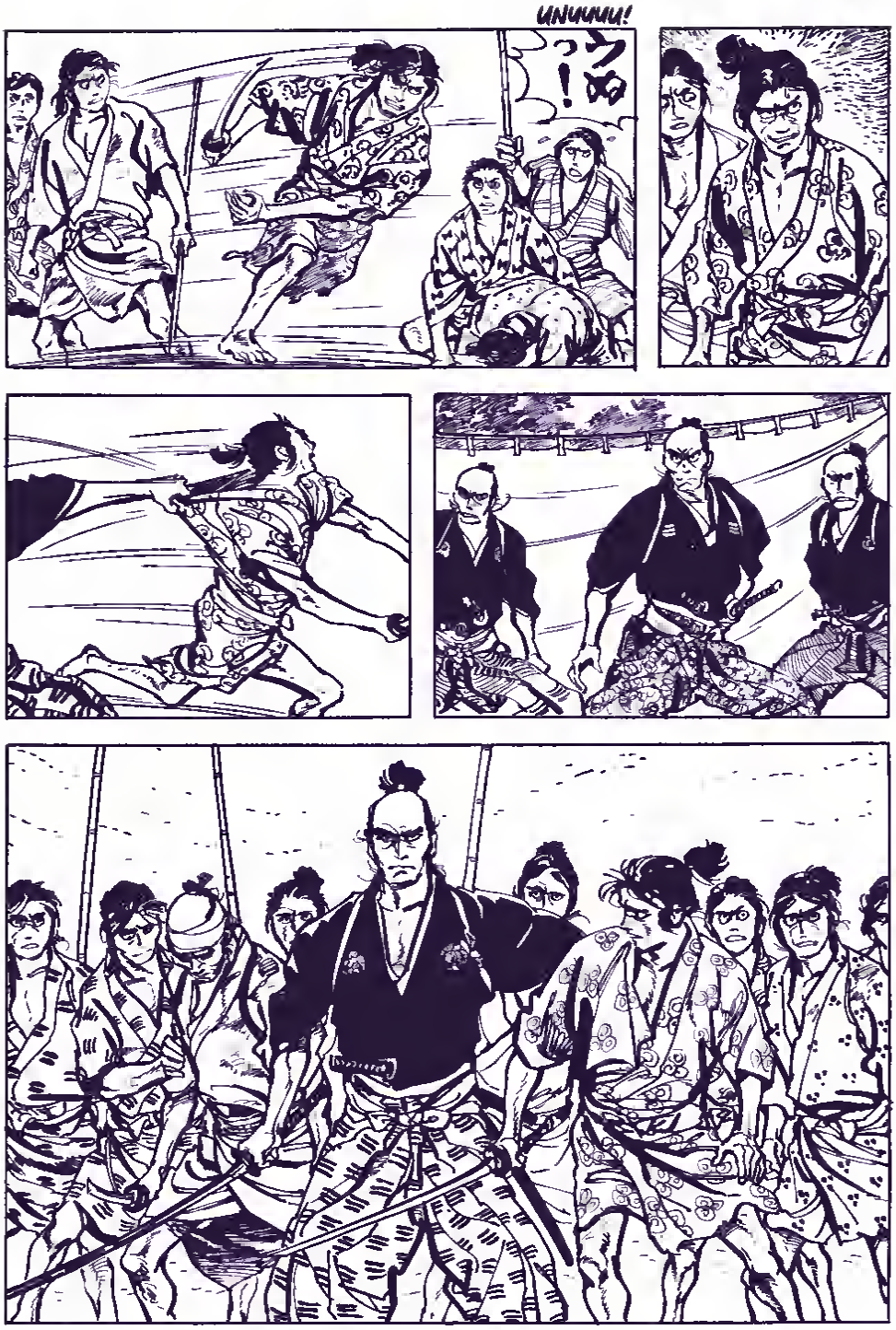
OHMM!

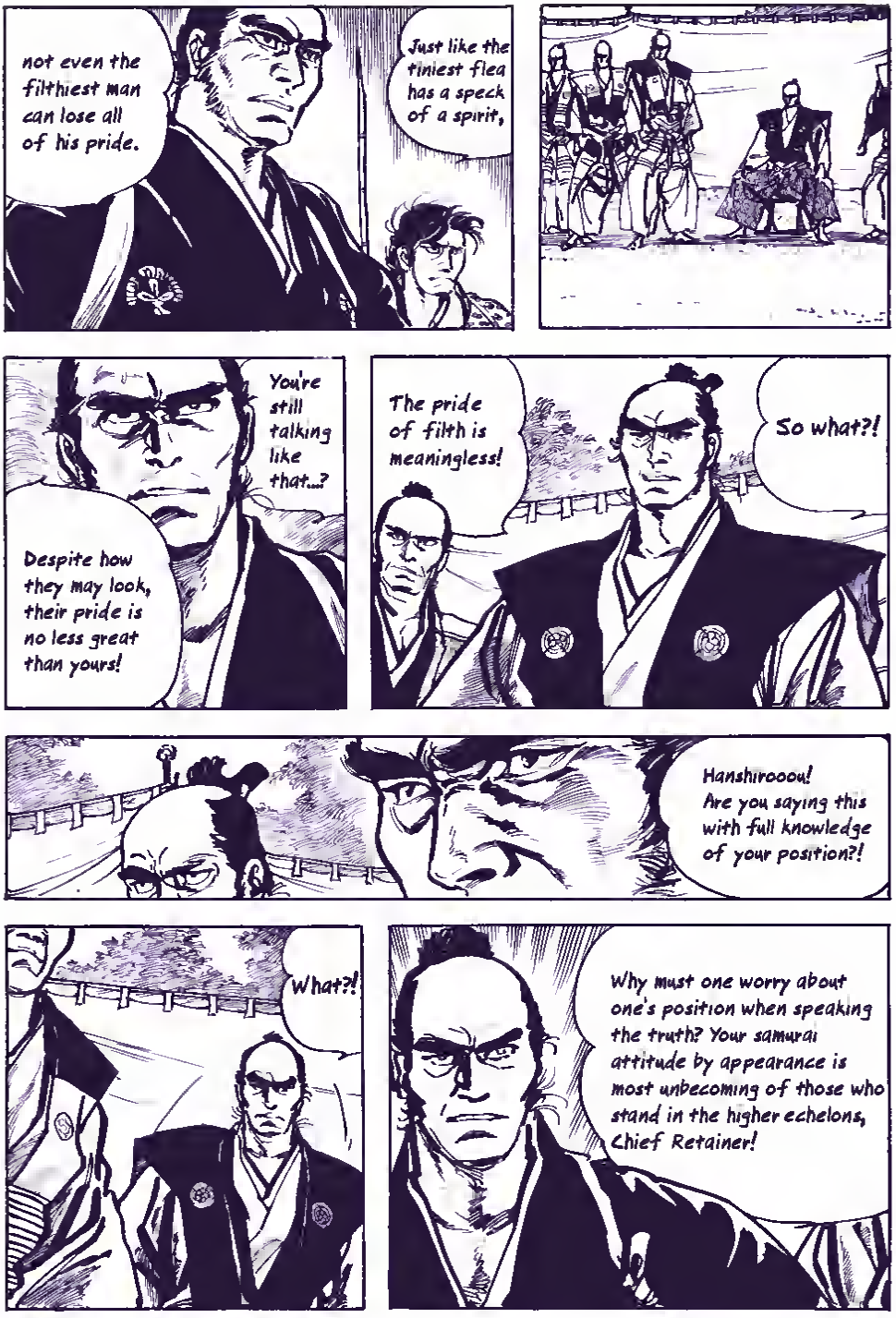



HAA...
HA...



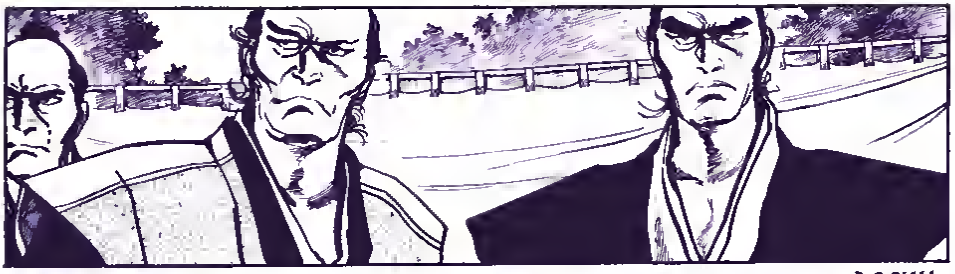
Kasa!!
Do you think you've protected the way of the samurai now?
FOOL!
Using filthy vagrants in order to protect your lord?! Whilst spouting off nonsense about the way of men?!?!
Desecrating the class of one's lord is not the way of a warrior!
Indeed. I have done nothing but follow the way of the samurai to the very end!
They have sacrificed their lives and protected their master. They are beautiful, and they are true samurai!
What gives you the right to call us filth? Class means nothing in the realms of life and death! That is something that any man experienced in battle should understand!
FILTH IS FILTH, PERIOD!
SILENCE!


UNUUUU!
うぬ！


not even the filthiest man can lose all of his pride.
Just like the tiniest flea has a speck of a spirit,
You're still talking like that...?
Despite how they may look, their pride is no less great than yours!
The pride of filth is meaningless!
So what?!
Hanshiroooo! Are you saying this with full knowledge of your position?!
What?!
Why must one worry about one's position when speaking the truth? Your samurai attitude by appearance is most unbecoming of those who stand in the higher echelons, Chief Retainer!

could never understand the true way of the samurai!
The likes of you
Let's go.
You're the ones who will never understand.
I see that any further answers will be pointless now!
YOU INSOLENT MAGGOTS!
STOOOOP!
KILL THEM!

I know there is nothing that I can say to make up for this, so I will offer up the innards from this body in exchange for forgiveness...
I would like to speak on behalf of them, and apologize for all the insolence that has taken place here.



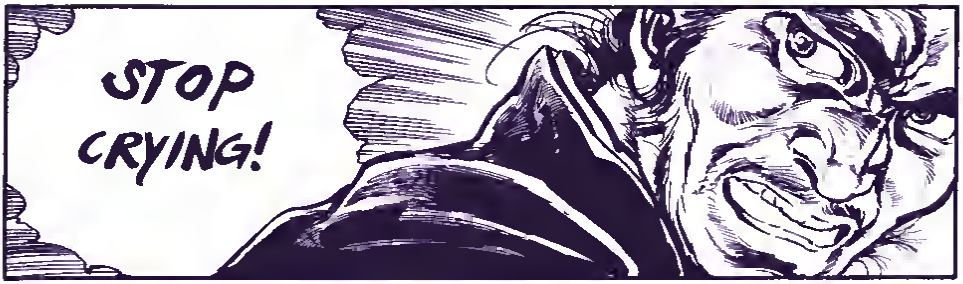
DOSUH

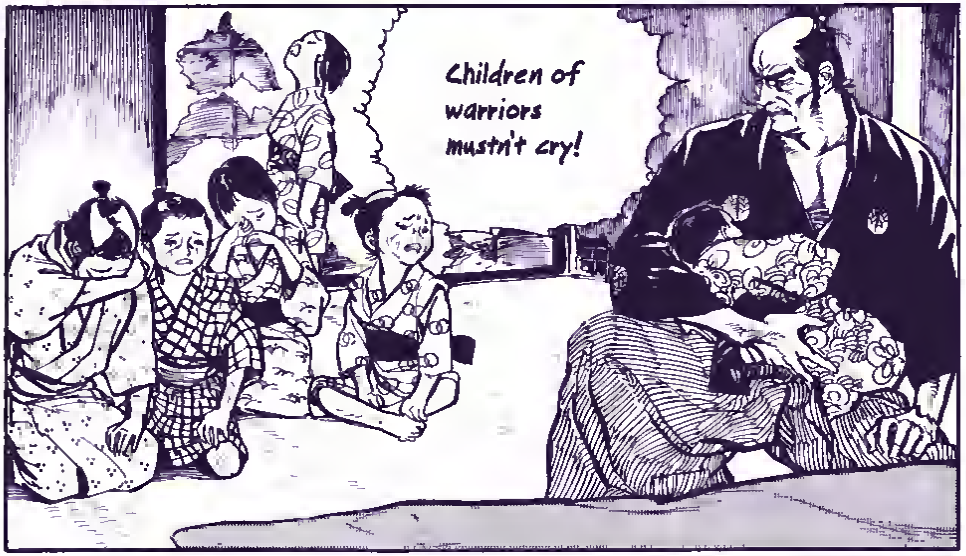
THE END

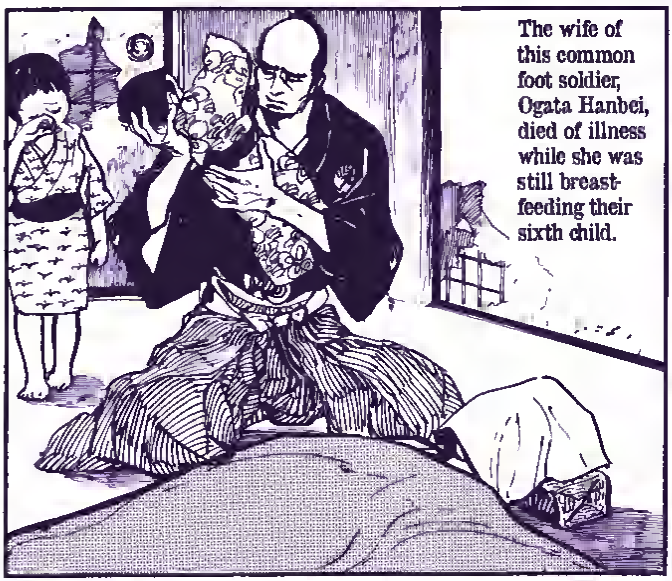
完

PROUD TO BE A SAMURAI EVEN THOUGH I'M DESTITUTE

それがし乞食にあらず


STOP CRYING!


Children of warriors mustn't cry!

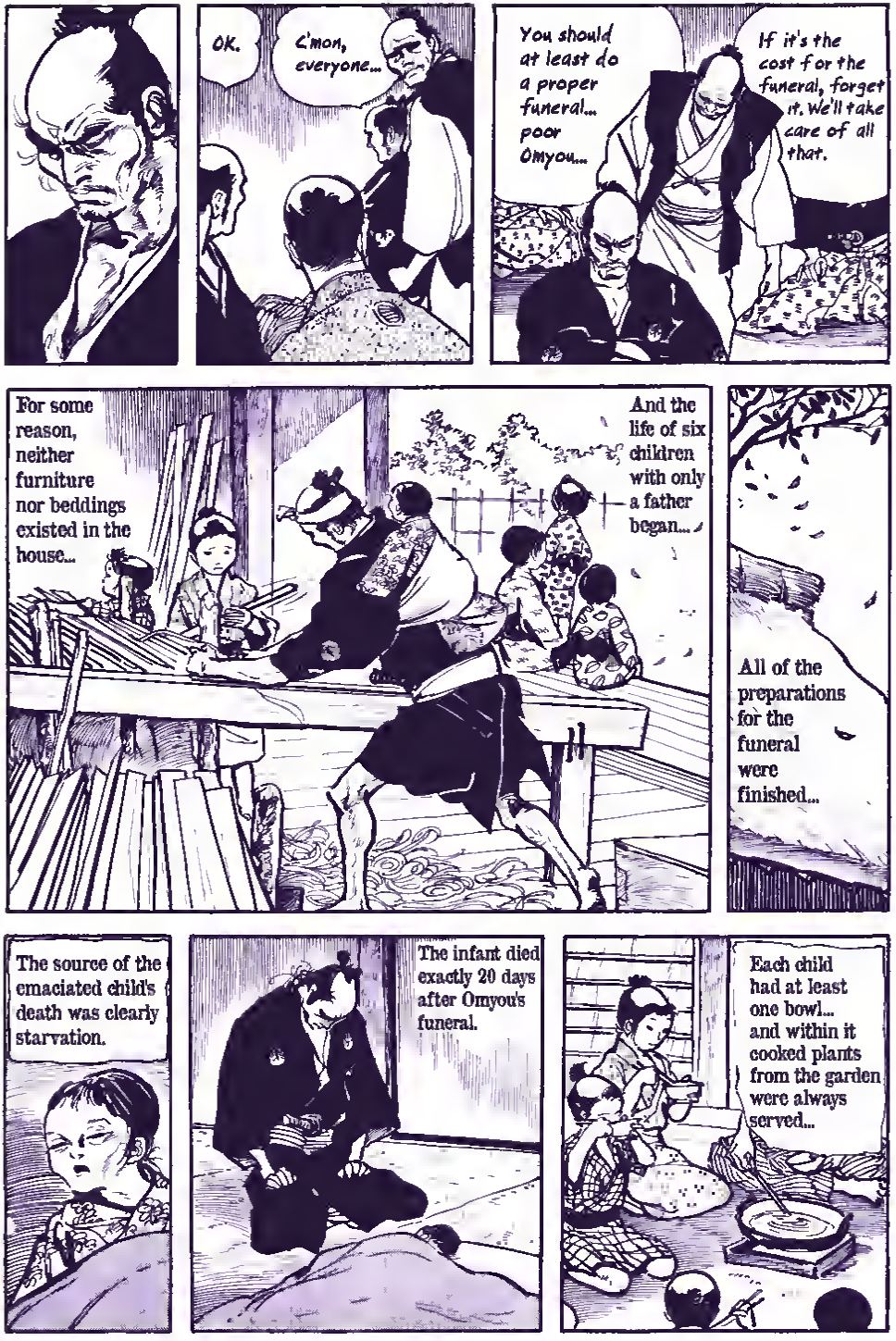

The wife of this common foot soldier, Ogata Hanbei, died of illness while she was still breast-feeding their sixth child.

ギャーッ

There, there...

If you don't mind, I'll take your fourth son, Yaichi.
I deeply appreciate your sentiments, everyone...
But I don't want to cause you any trouble. I would also hate to make my children ashamed of anything.
But, Hanbei!
Let your second daughter come to my place.
Hanbei, let me take care of your youngest child. My wife said she'd raise her.

I will meet all of my six children's needs!
You should listen to everyone...
When you include all the work it will take to raise your infant child, it's simply too much!
I gratefully accept your kindness, but nothing more...
Yeah, the sooner the better.
First we need to let the boss know.
Mmm.
We should start making preparations for the funeral...
By the way...
Hanbei! What are you saying?!
I'll go bury my wife's corpse tomorrow. You don't need to worry about a funeral...
Hold on!
Eh?


OK.
C'mon, everyone...
You should at least do a proper funeral... poor Omyou...
If it's the cost for the funeral, forget it. We'll take care of all that.
For some reason, neither furniture nor beddings existed in the house...
And the life of six children with only a father began...
All of the preparations for the funeral were finished...
The source of the emaciated child's death was clearly starvation.
The infant died exactly 20 days after Omyou's funeral.
Each child had at least one bowl... and within it cooked plants from the garden were always served...

!
Look how many there are...
Grandma Nishida next door gave them to us! They taste wonderful!
Ah, father!
What are you eating?!
Ah, father, what are you doing?!
YOU CANNOT EAT THIS!

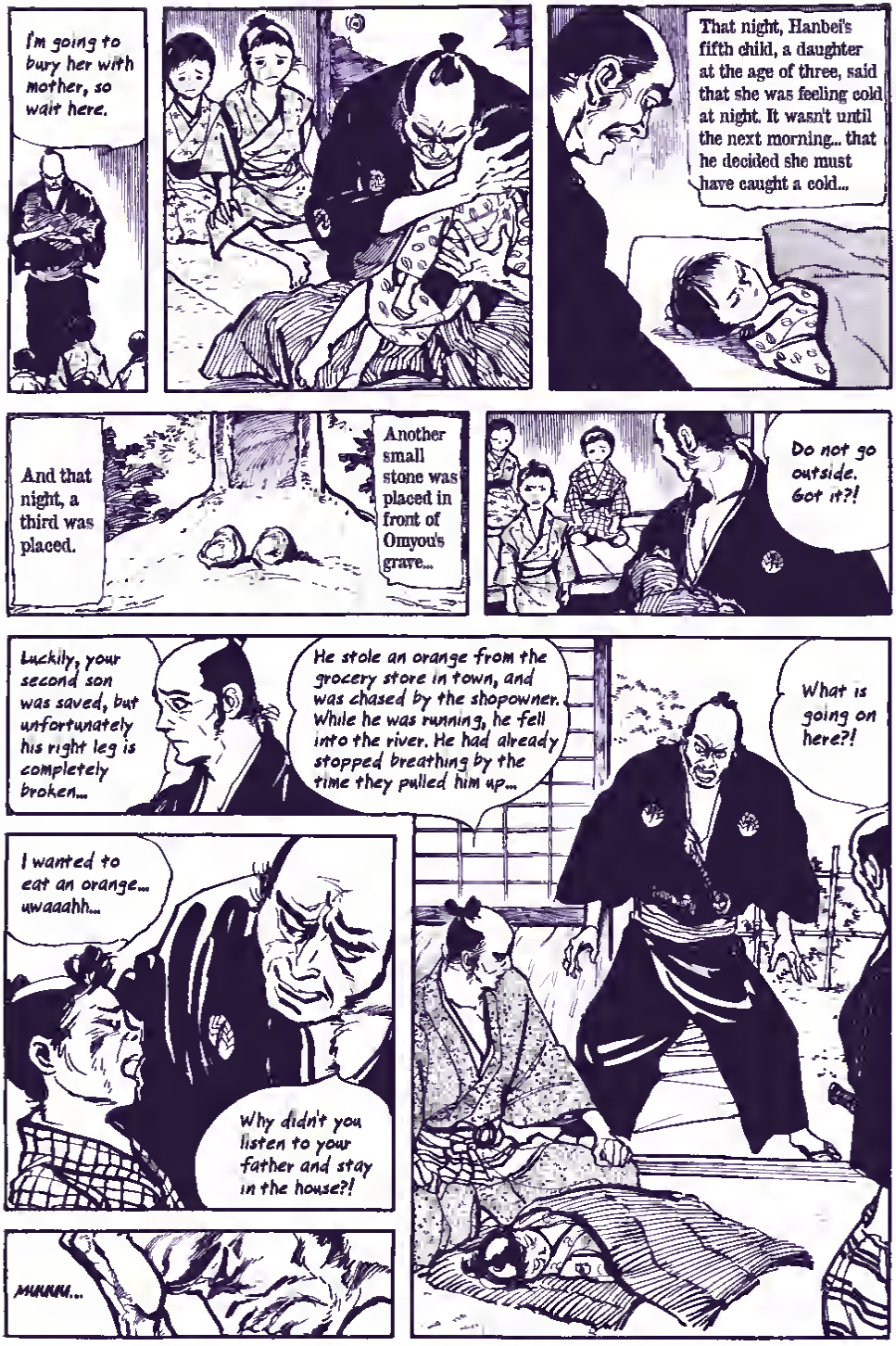
ウワ～ッ
Only beggars eat food given to them by others!
When did you all become beggars?!
西田
Just wait! I'll go bring you all something to eat!
Please stop giving food to my children!
I have a request for you! We may be poor, but the Ogata family is not a family of beggars!
キ!?
!

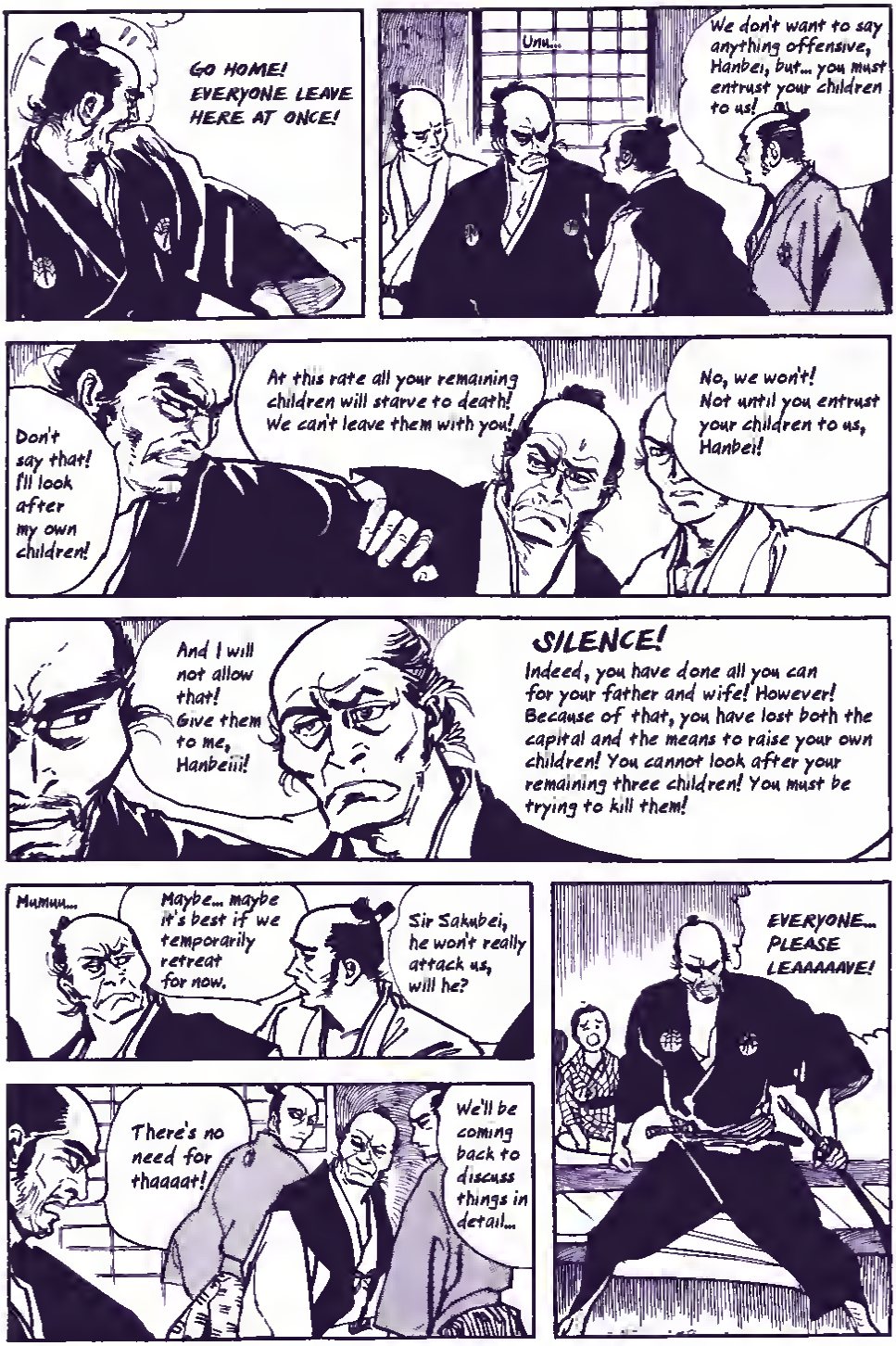
GYAAAH!

No one come until I say so...
Make sure you chew well...
It tastes great, dad!
It doesn't taste like anything we've ever eaten, huh, Kuni-chan?
What is this? It's good...
Alright!
What happened to his stipend from the clan?
He has also apparently amassed a great deal of debt and sold off all the things in his house to pay for both his father's long illness and Miss Omyou's illness...
So that's why he can barely eat?!
The debt collector takes about three ryou* from him per year.
I went to the homeworking wholesaler the other day and asked them if they could cut even a little bit off of Hanbei's debt, but it doesn't seem like they will.
Oh my...
I see.
Eh?! He's feeding them stray dog meat?!

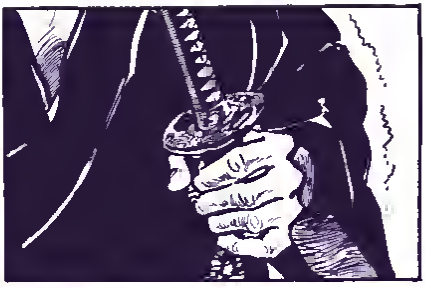
*T/L note: Ryou is the currency that was used in Japan before yen, and it doesn't really translate into modern terms well. The easiest way to put it is that one ryou is equal to one koku, which measures the amount of rice needed to feed one man for one year.

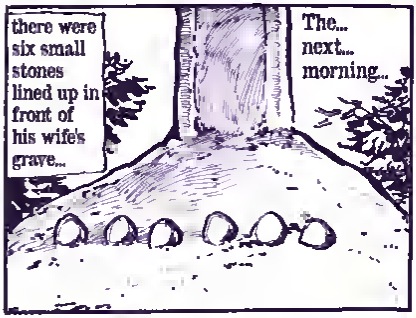
Hanbei's children are skin and bone! They're suffering!
But is it really alright for us to let him go like this, as his allies?
I assume Miss Omyou also died from malnutrition...
Not only does he refuse help from us, his own brethren, but he even said he turned down assistance from his boss! Hanbei really is a piece of work...
Muu...
But there isn't anything we can do, is there? If we offer even the slightest bit of help, his eyes gleam and he gets angry...
PACH!!


I'm going to bury her with mother, so wait here.
That night, Hanbei's fifth child, a daughter at the age of three, said that she was feeling cold at night. It wasn't until the next morning... that he decided she must have caught a cold...
And that night, a third was placed.
Another small stone was placed in front of Omyou's grave...
Do not go outside. Got it?!
Luckily, your second son was saved, but unfortunately his right leg is completely broken...
He stole an orange from the grocery store in town, and was chased by the shopowner. While he was running, he fell into the river. He had already stopped breathing by the time they pulled him up...
What is going on here?!
I wanted to eat an orange... uwaaahh...
Why didn't you listen to your father and stay in the house?!
MUMM...

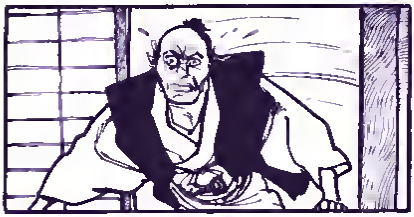

GO HOME! EVERYONE LEAVE HERE AT ONCE!
Unn...
We don't want to say anything offensive, Hanbei, but... you must entrust your children to us!
Don't say that! I'll look after my own children!
At this rate all your remaining children will starve to death! We can't leave them with you!
No, we won't! Not until you entrust your children to us, Hanbei!
And I will not allow that! Give them to me, Hanbeiii!
SILENCE!
Indeed, you have done all you can for your father and wife! However! Because of that, you have lost both the capital and the means to raise your own children! You cannot look after your remaining three children! You must be trying to kill them!
Mumuu...
Maybe... maybe it's best if we temporarily retreat for now.
Sir Sakubei, he won't really attack us, will he?
There's no need for thaaaat!
We'll be coming back to discuss things in detail...
EVERYONE... PLEASE LEAAAAAVE!

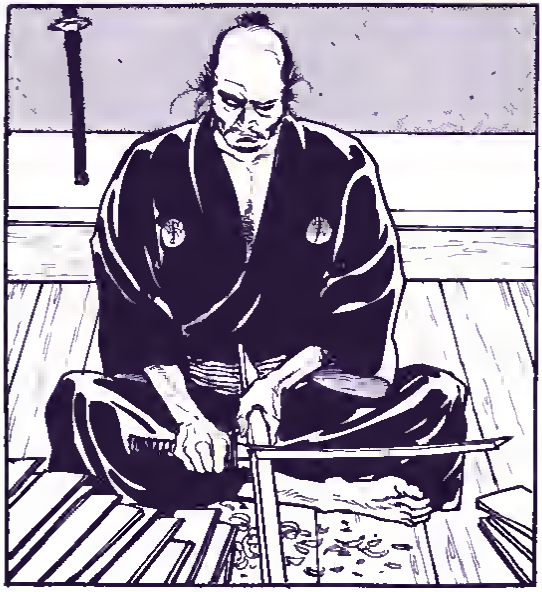
This... this...!

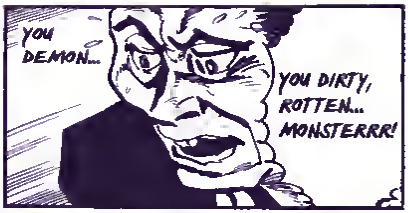


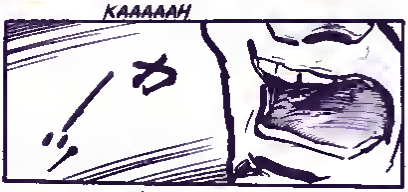

there were six small stones lined up in front of his wife's grave...
The... next... morning...

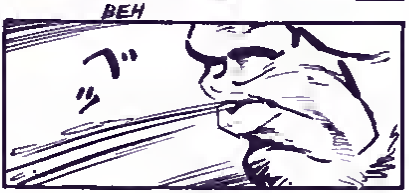
This is the only thing I cannot sell!
THIS!

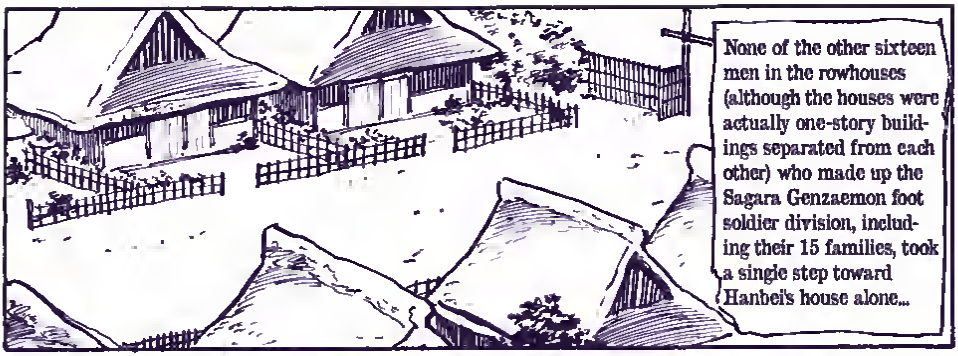





YOU DEMON...
YOU DIRTY, ROTTEN... MONSTERRR!


KAAAAAH


BEH


None of the other sixteen men in the rowhouses (although the houses were actually one-story buildings separated from each other) who made up the Sagara Genzaemon foot soldier division, including their 15 families, took a single step toward Hanbei's house alone...

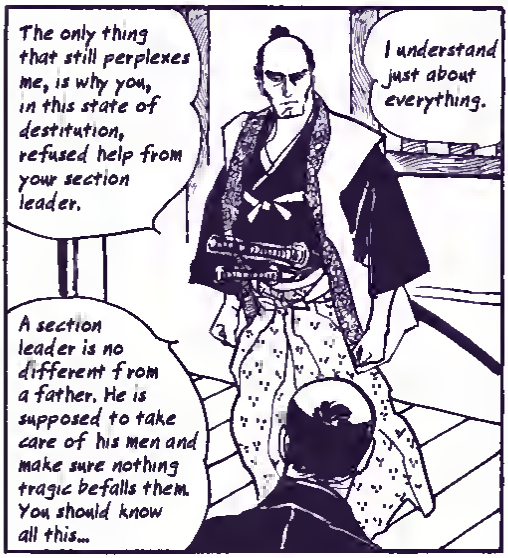
There was no reply, so he entered...

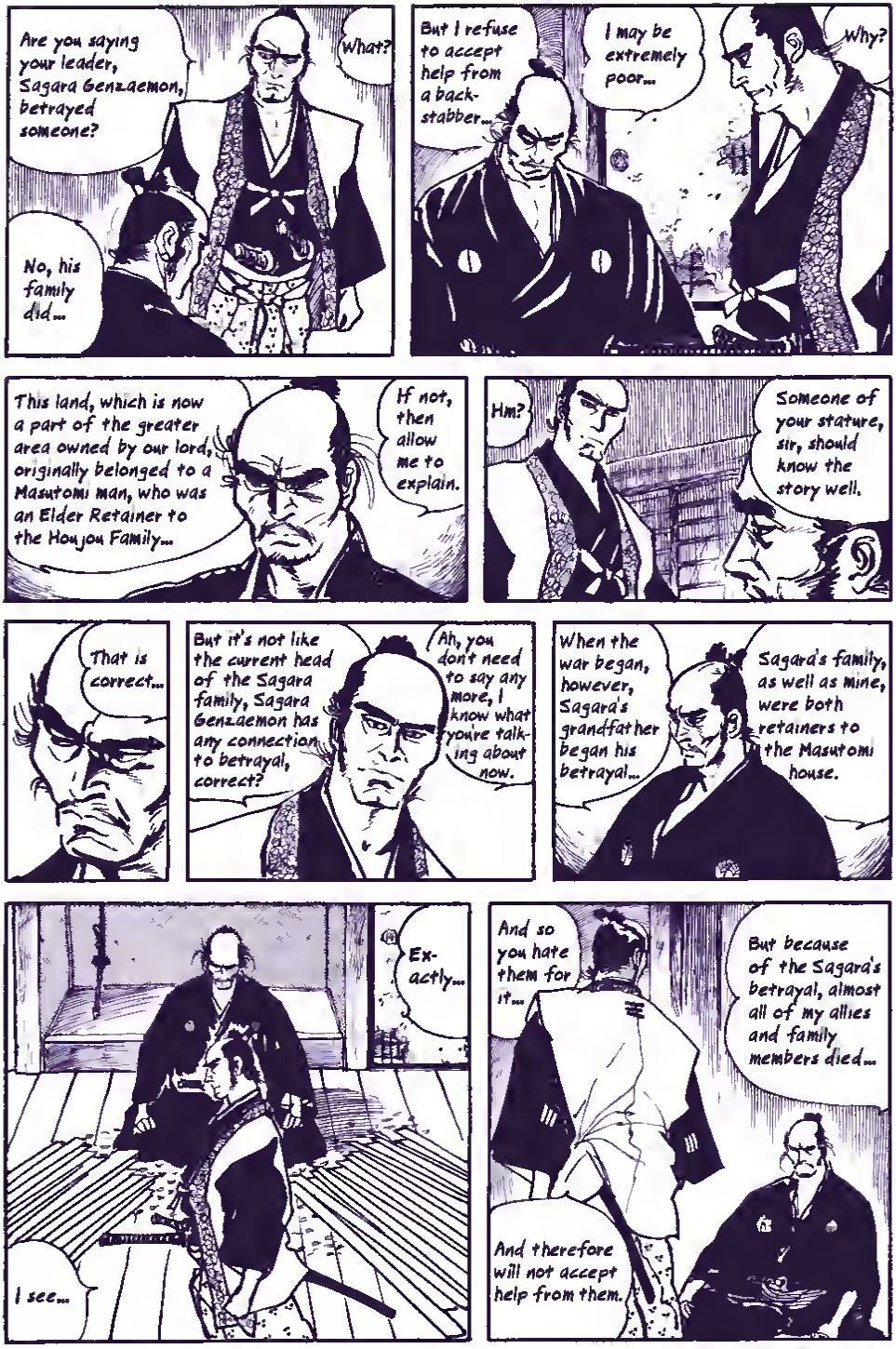
Are you home, Ogata Hanbei?!

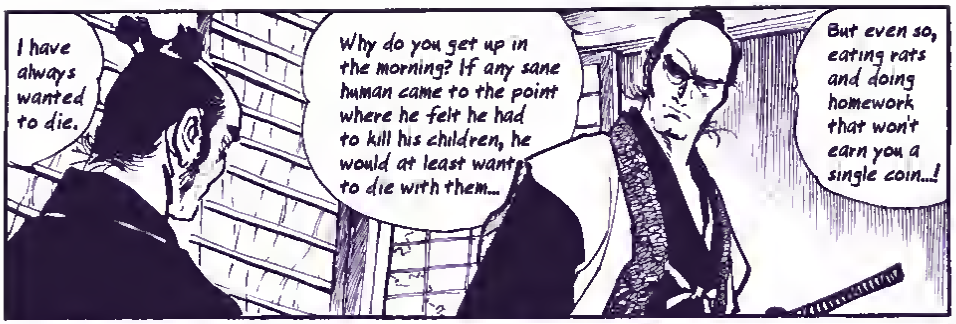
It was after ten days, that an Inspector paid a visit to Hanbei's house...

Hoh! Nothing but your long and short swords...
I came after hearing the rumors, but as I can see... you really have nothing...

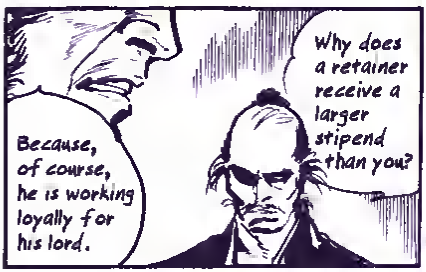
Hanbei was busy eating plants and rat meat...
If you're home, then why don't you answer?

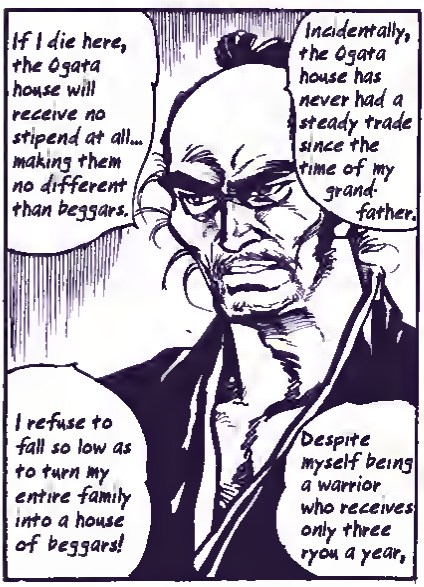

The only thing that still perplexes me, is why you, in this state of destitution, refused help from your section leader.
I understand just about everything.
A section leader is no different from a father. He is supposed to take care of his men and make sure nothing tragic befalls them. You should know all this...


Are you saying your leader, Sagara Genzaemon, betrayed someone?
What?
No, his family did...
But I refuse to accept help from a back-stabber...
I may be extremely poor...
Why?
This land, which is now a part of the greater area owned by our lord, originally belonged to a Masutomi man, who was an Elder Retainer to the Houjou Family...
If not, then allow me to explain.
Hm?
Someone of your stature, sir, should know the story well.
That is correct...
But it's not like the current head of the Sagara family, Sagara Genzaemon has any connection to betrayal, correct?
Ah, you don't need to say any more, I know what you're talking about now.
When the war began, however, Sagara's grandfather began his betrayal...
Sagara's family, as well as mine, were both retainers to the Masutomi house.
Ex-actly...
I see...
And so you hate them for it...
But because of the Sagara's betrayal, almost all of my allies and family members died...
And therefore will not accept help from them.


I have always wanted to die.
Why do you get up in the morning? If any sane human came to the point where he felt he had to kill his children, he would at least want to die with them...
But even so, eating rats and doing homework that won't earn you a single coin...!

For example?!
Inspector, have you ever thought about the interrelationship between master and servant?


Why does a retainer receive a larger stipend than you?
Because, of course, he is working loyally for his lord.

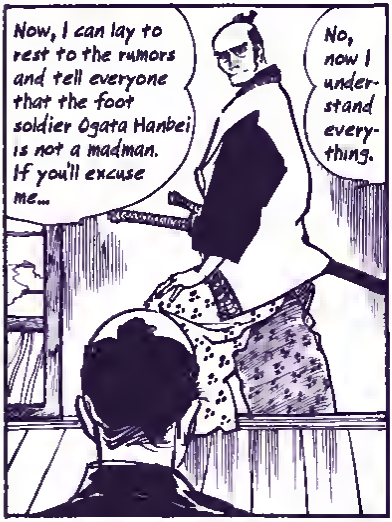

If I die here, the Ogata house will receive no stipend at all... making them no different than beggars.
Incidentally, the Ogata house has never had a steady trade since the time of my grandfather.
I refuse to fall so low as to turn my entire family into a house of beggars!
Despite myself being a warrior who receives only three ryou a year,

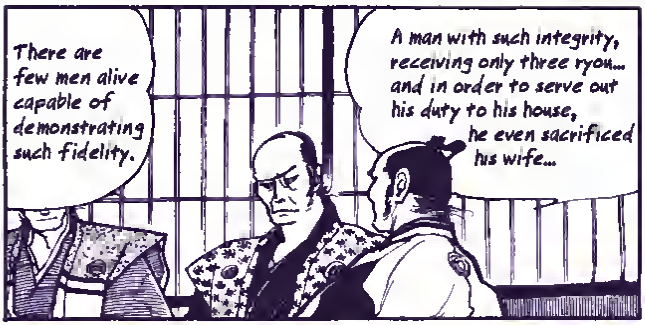
No!
Hoh...
Then what is your purpose?

I caused my beloved wife to die without satisfying her even once...
And then my sixth child, who was more important to me than my own life died... would there be any parent who would want to continue living after that?
Then are you saying that the man who is sitting in front of me right now is a living corpse...?

I wonder if there exist any other warriors of such mettle these days...?

I see... so you plan to eat rats and suck on sticks until a chance for work appears.
Exactly!

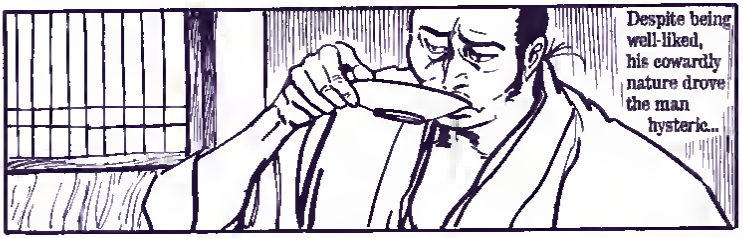

Now, I can lay to rest to the rumors and tell everyone that the foot soldier Ogata Hanbei is not a madman. If you'll excuse me...
No, now I understand everything.


There are few men alive capable of demonstrating such fidelity.
A man with such integrity, receiving only three ryou... and in order to serve out his duty to his house, he even sacrificed his wife...

The story of the foot soldier Ogata Hanbei soon spread through the castle...

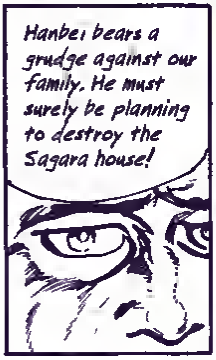
No matter the reason, his guts easily surpass those of our greatest warriors! He is one to be admired!
No... he doesn't sound loyal to me at all - he probably just doesn't want to become a beggar.

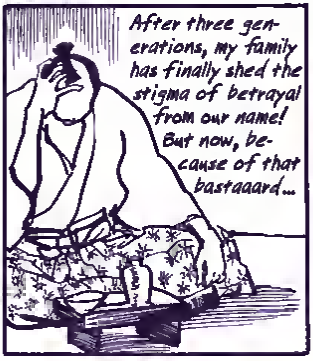
Hearing this, the squad leader Sagara Genza-emon-
Hmmm...
Even so, it goes without saying that his stipend should be taken away for accusing people of betrayal. He may not want to become a beggar, but at this rate, he's nothing but a devil!

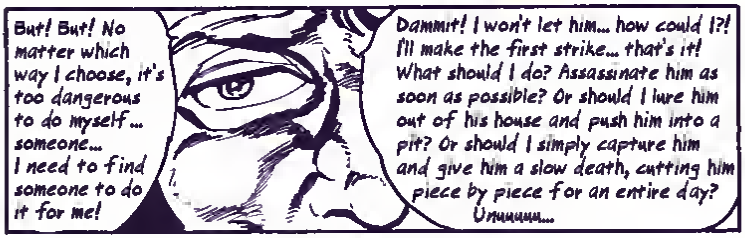

Despite being well-liked, his cowardly nature drove the man hysteric...

fell ill and stopped going to the castle, after finding out that rumors of his family's betrayal had spread once more.

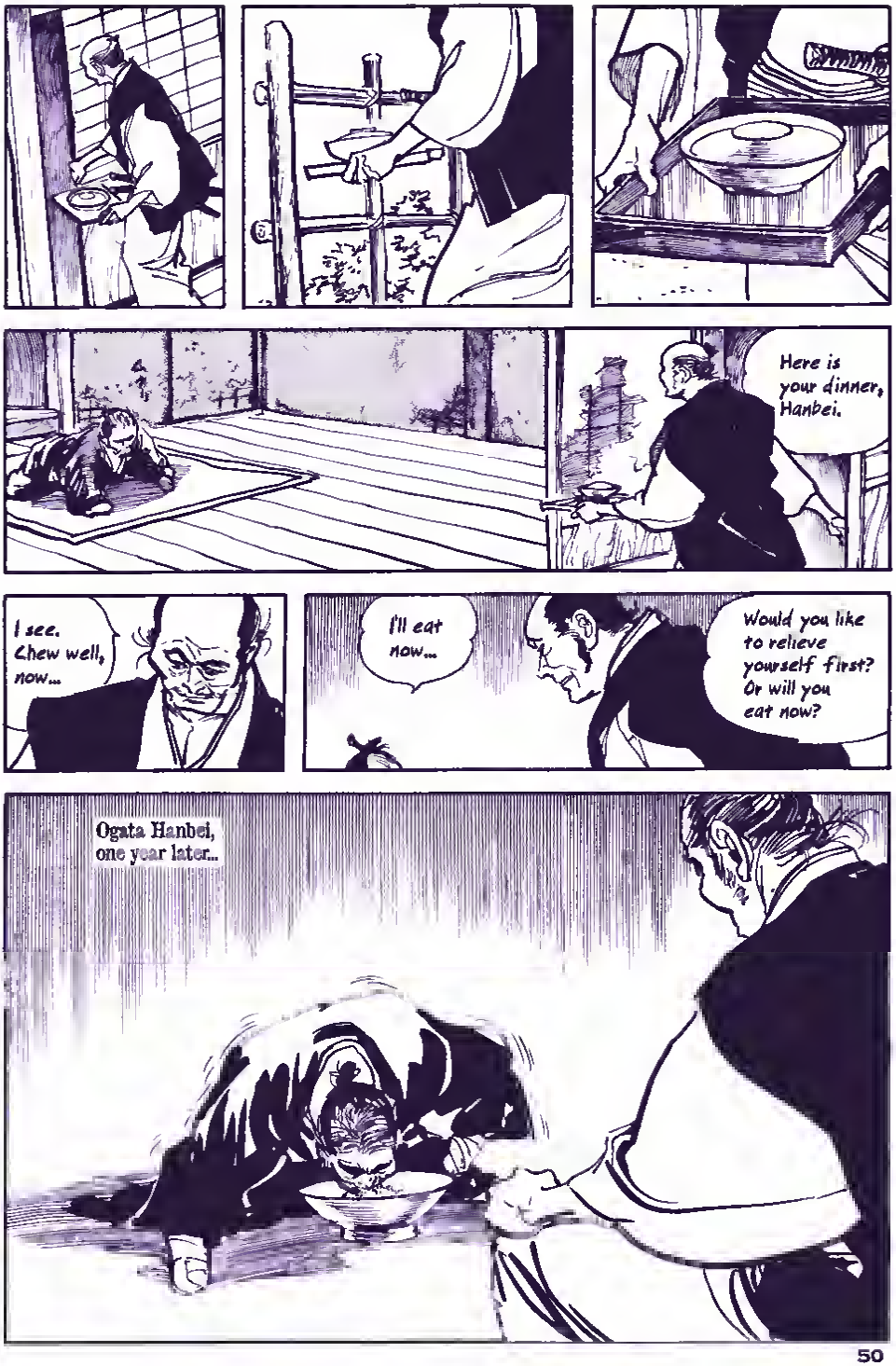
That's it... that must be it!

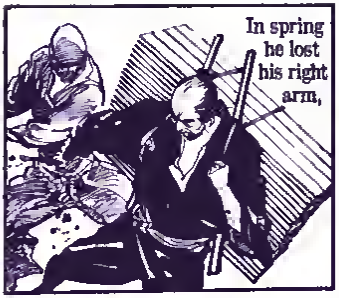

Hanbei bears a grudge against our family. He must surely be planning to destroy the Sagara house!

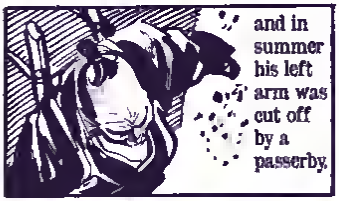

After three generations, my family has finally shed the stigma of betrayal from our name! But now, because of that bastaaard...

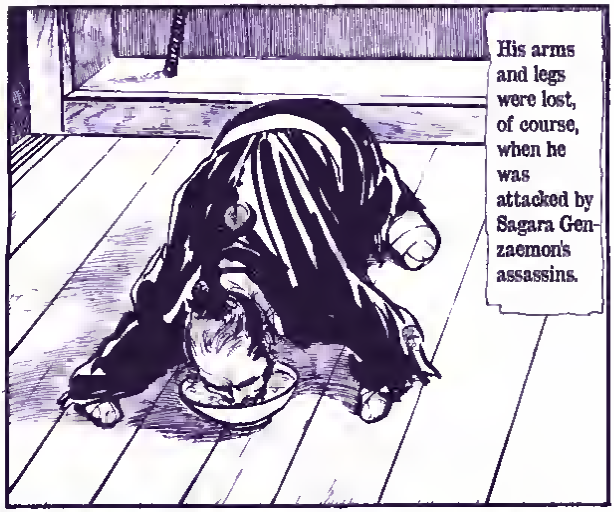

But! But! No matter which way I choose, it's too dangerous to do myself... someone... I need to find someone to do it for me!
Dammit! I won't let him... how could I?! I'll make the first strike... that's it! What should I do? Assassinate him as soon as possible? Or should I lure him out of his house and push him into a pit? Or should I simply capture him and give him a slow death, cutting him piece by piece for an entire day? Unuuuuu...

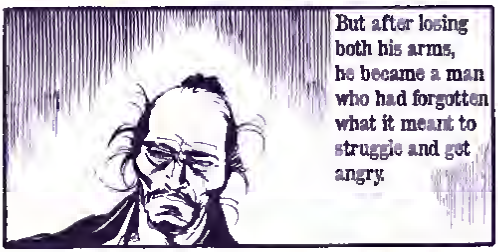
I got it... he's afraid of becoming a beggar, isn't he?! That's it! I'll just make him into one. It'll be ten times more entertaining than simply killing him! It's perfect!
Wait... if he dies in some strange manner, all the eyes in the castle will look to me! This won't do... I'll have to keep going to work as usual...


Here is your dinner, Hanbei.
I see. Chew well, now...
I'll eat now...
Would you like to relieve yourself first? Or will you eat now?
Ogata Hanbei, one year later...

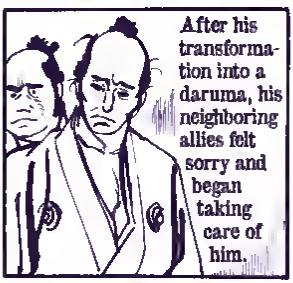

In spring he lost his right arm,

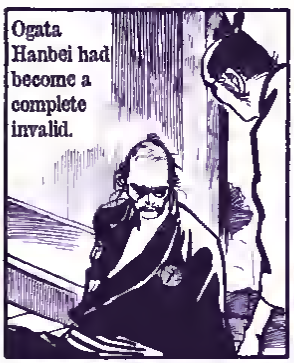

and in summer his left arm was cut off by a passerby.

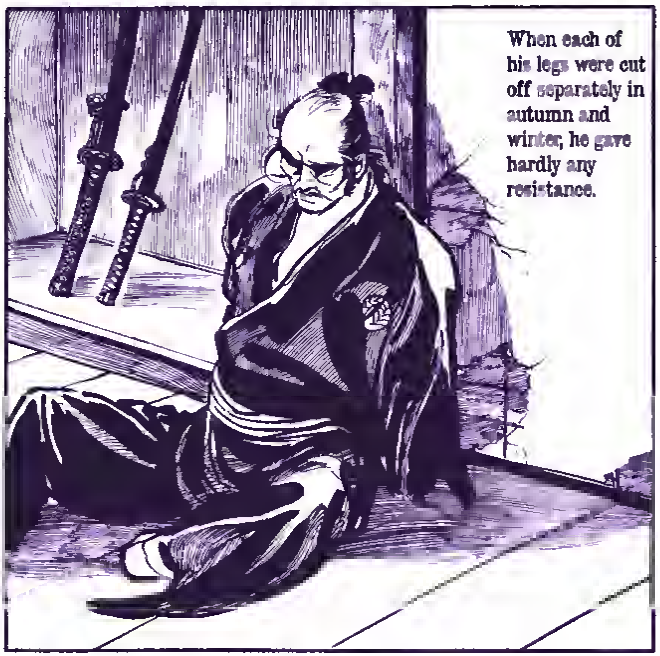

His arms and legs were lost, of course, when he was attacked by Sagara Genzaemon's assassins.

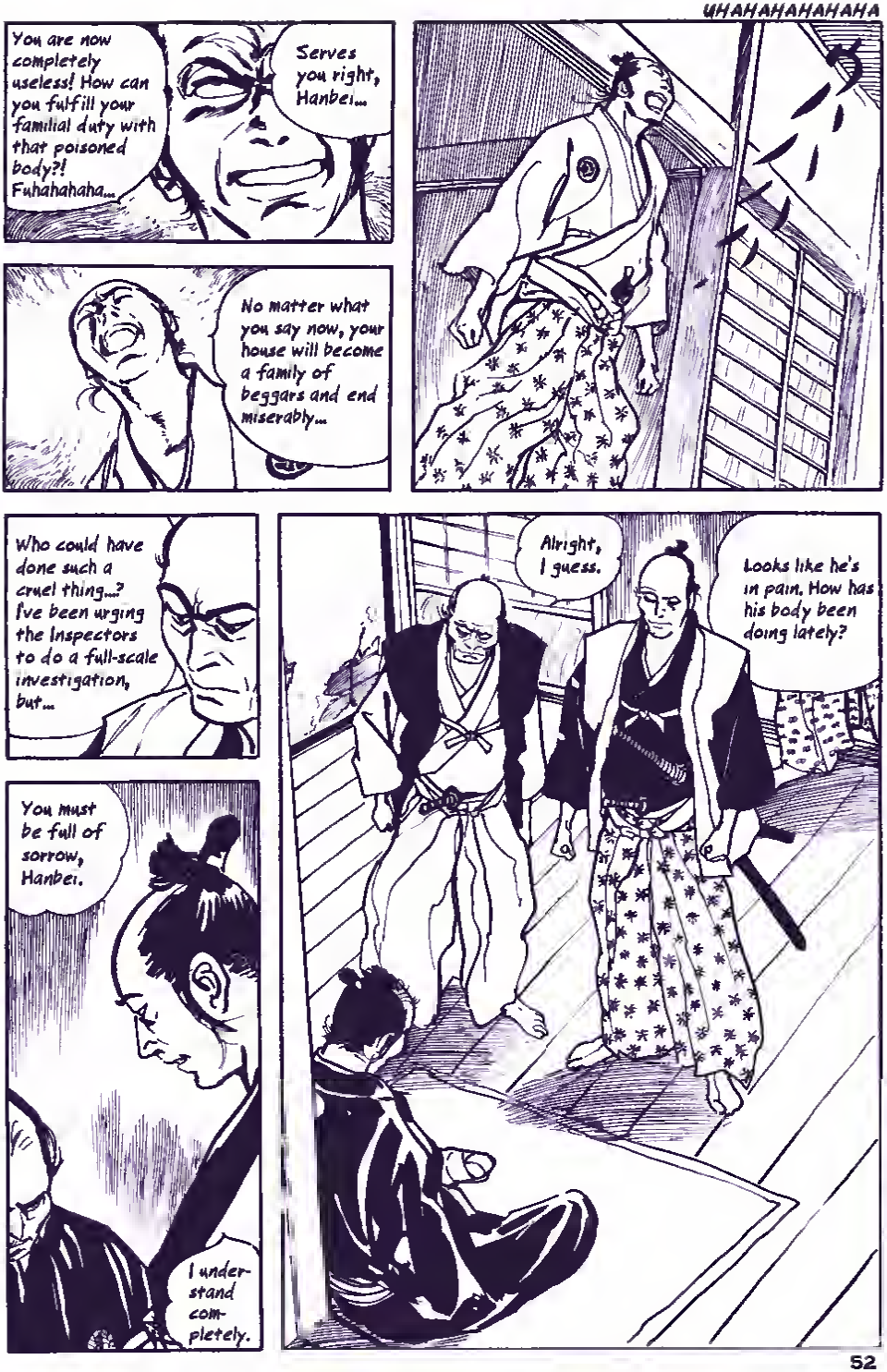

But after losing both his arms, he became a man who had forgotten what it meant to struggle and get angry.

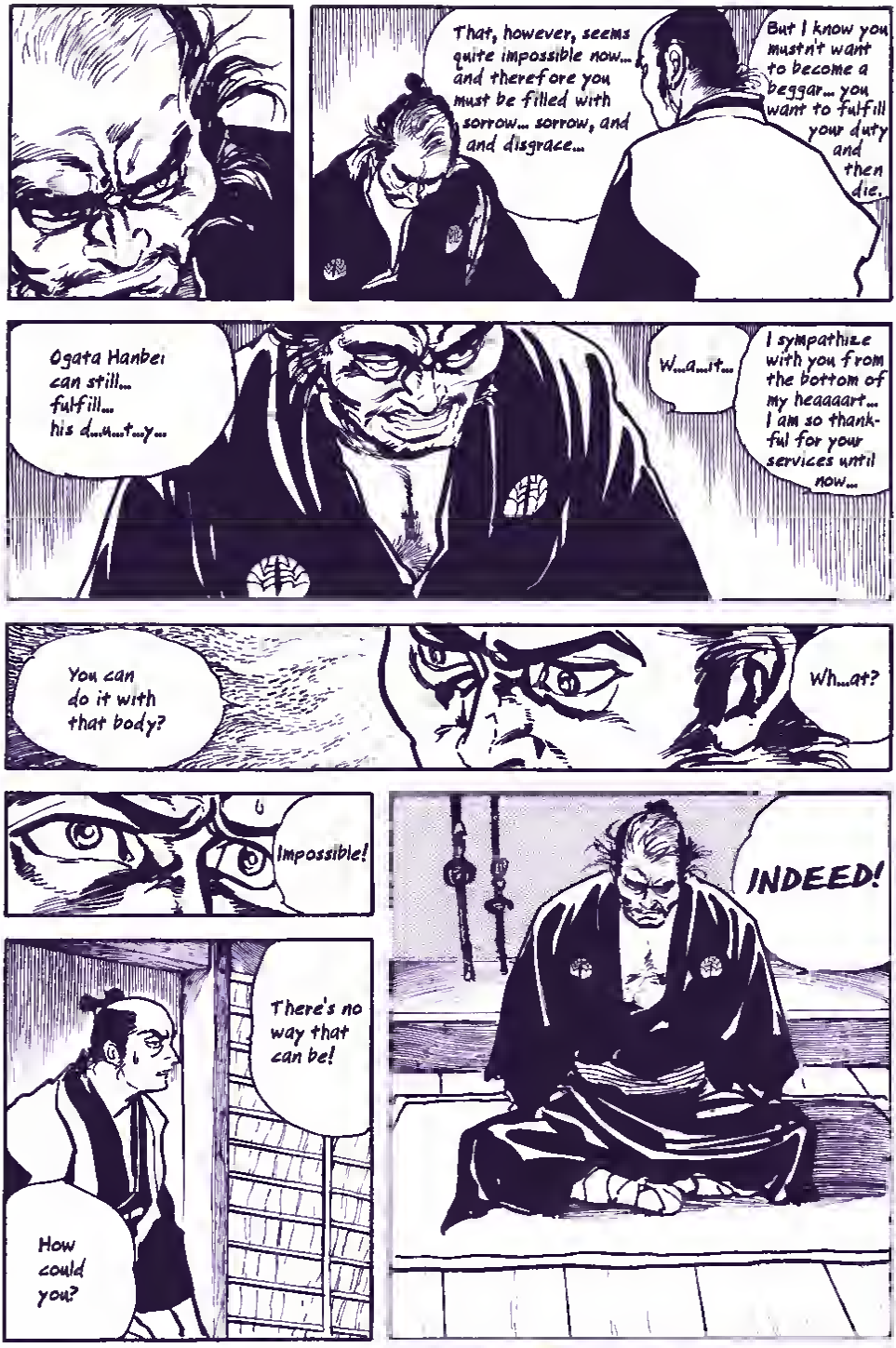
He knew exactly whose grudge was the cause of all this...


After his transformation into a daruma, his neighboring allies felt sorry and began taking care of him.


Ogata Hanbei had become a complete invalid.

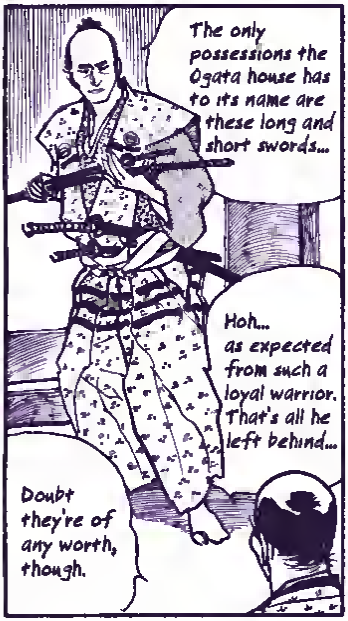

When each of his legs were cut off separately in autumn and winter, he gave hardly any resistance.

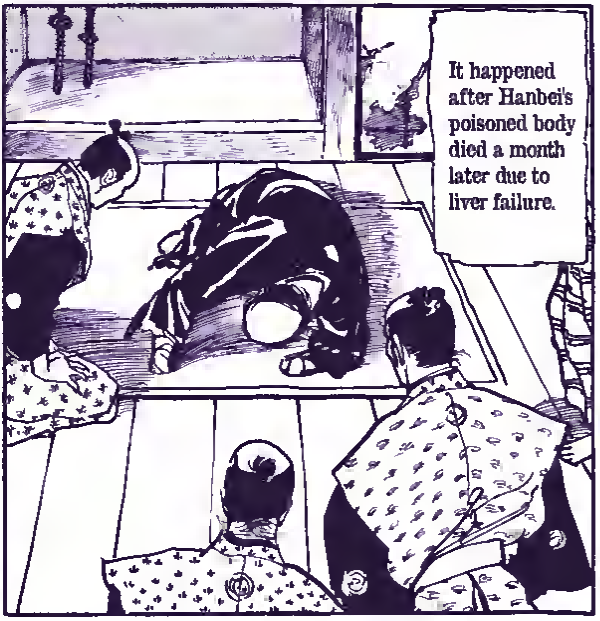

You are now completely useless! How can you fulfill your familial duty with that poisoned body?! Fuhahahaha...
Serves you right, Hanbei...
No matter what you say now, your house will become a family of beggars and end miserably...
Who could have done such a cruel thing...? I've been urging the inspectors to do a full-scale investigation, but...
You must be full of sorrow, Hanbei.
I understand completely.
Alright, I guess.
Looks like he's in pain. How has his body been doing lately?

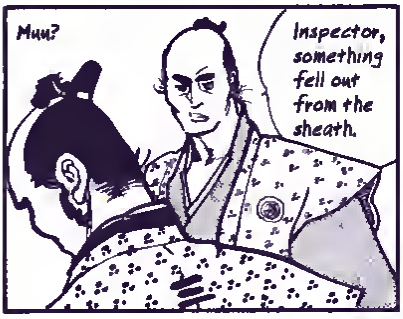

That, however, seems quite impossible now... and therefore you must be filled with sorrow... sorrow, and and disgrace...
But I know you mustn't want to become a beggar... you want to fulfill your duty and then die.
Ogata Hanbei can still... fulfill... his d...u...t...y...
W...a...it...
I sympathize with you from the bottom of my heaaaart... I am so thankful for your services until now...
You can do it with that body?
Wh...at?
Impossible!
INDEED!
There's no way that can be!
How could you?

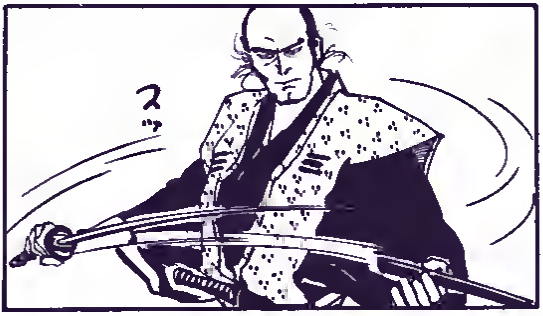
How could youuuuu?!

And- he did-

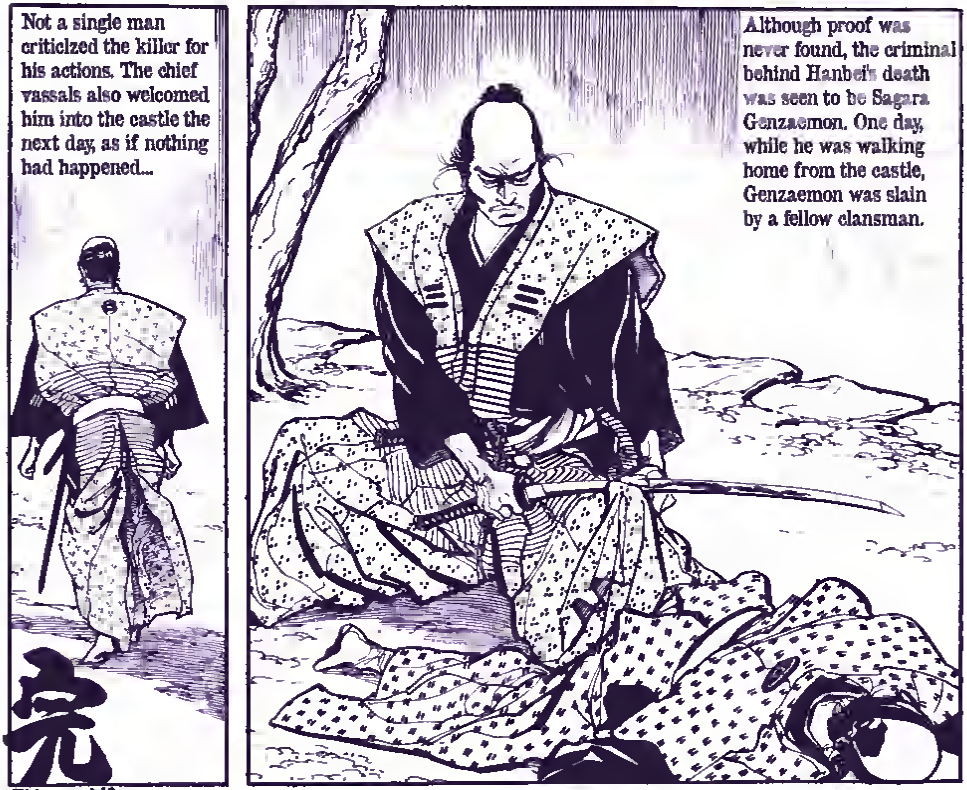

The only possessions the Ogata house has to its name are these long and short swords...
Hoh... as expected from such a loyal warrior. That's all he left behind...
Doubt they're of any worth, though.

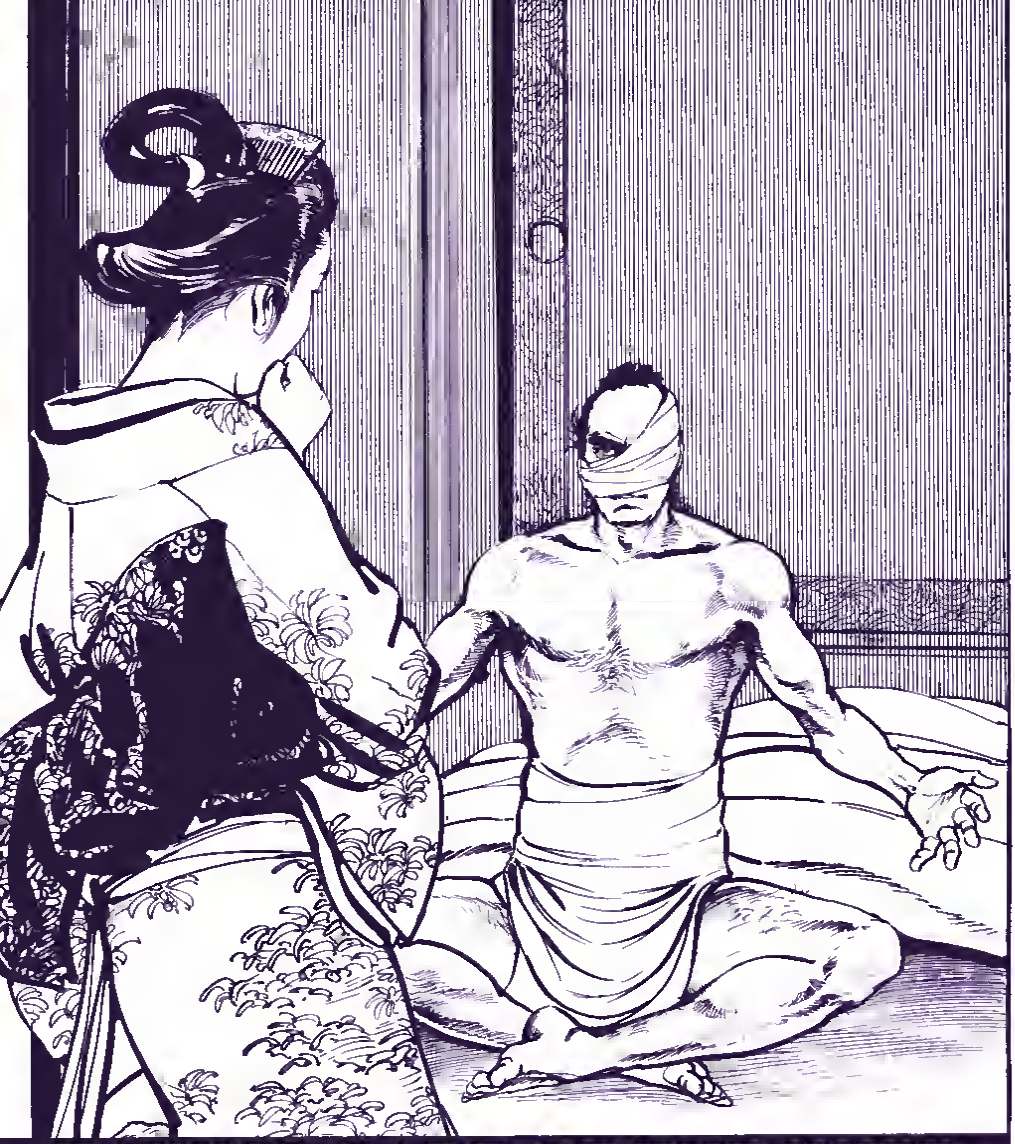

It happened after Hanbei's poisoned body died a month later due to liver failure.


Muu?
Inspector, something fell out from the sheath.


スッ

This is...!
Muun...
A document...!!
This blade was received from the successes of the ancestors of the Masutomi house. The Ogata family worked for this house as retainers receiving three ryou per year. Over 58 years, they received a total of 292 koku.
On this document, the following was written:
292 koku, 292 ryou. At the cheapest, this blade is worth at least 600 ryou. To show proof of my loyalty and gratitude for the stipend thus far, however, this blade is to be offered up to the lord. The conduct surrounding me can be described as nothing more than cruelty that turns the relationship between master and servant into nothing more than calculations. However, despite my sorrow, I spent my youth working as a foot soldier, but was unable to find work after the war. I will now die without having ever found a job, but I still intend to fulfill all my obligations before I do so. I have also paid off the 12 ryou debt I owe the homeworkers.
Signed, Ogata Hanbei Masanori
The chief retainers were deeply moved, cursing themselves for not realizing the man's true worth sooner and allowing him to end his life as a low-class foot soldier.
He was a man with flawless loyalty thicker than any man's! He is the farthest thing from a beggar!
Despite having a sword worth 800 ryou, he still let his wife die! Muuuuu!
Ogata Hanbei truly was an amazing man! Undoubtedly!
Muuu...
After showing the item to an appraiser, it was found the blade was indeed a valuable sword, currently worth 800 ryou.


Not a single man criticized the killer for his actions. The chief vassals also welcomed him into the castle the next day, as if nothing had happened...
Although proof was never found, the criminal behind Hanbei's death was seen to be Sagara Genzaemon. One day, while he was walking home from the castle, Genzaemon was slain by a fellow clansman.
完
THE END

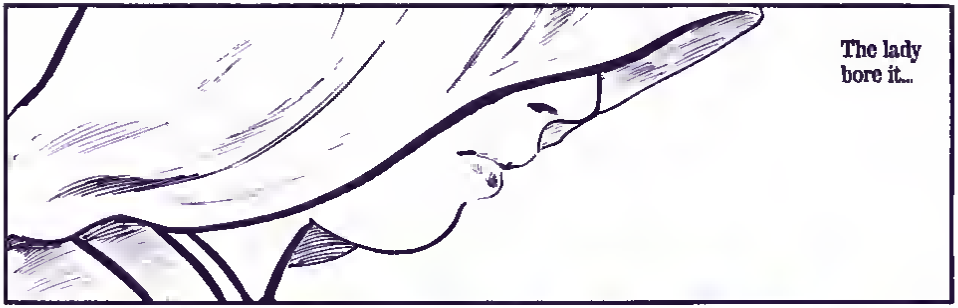


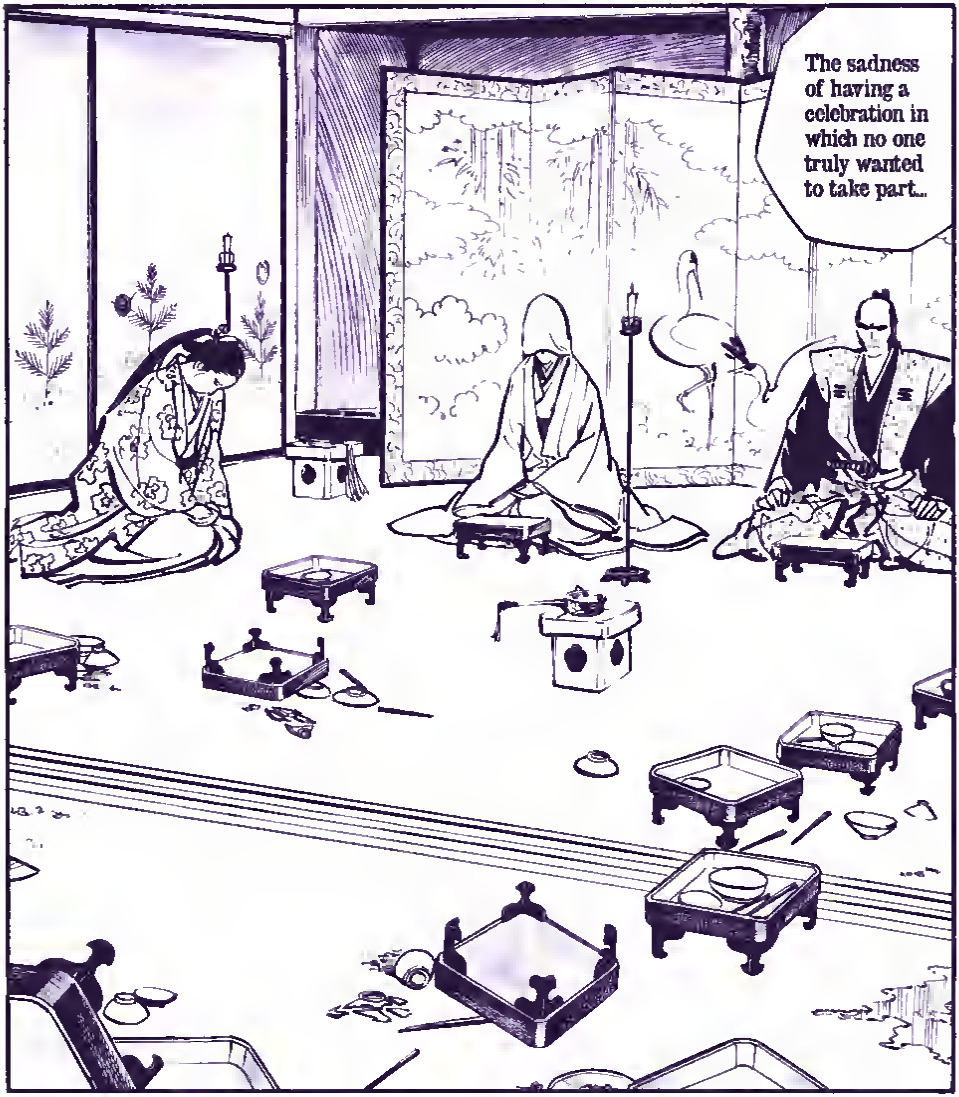
TAKING CARE OF THE WIFE

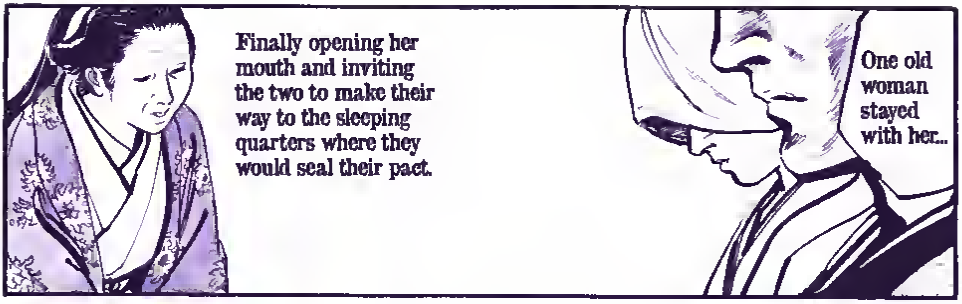
仕末妻

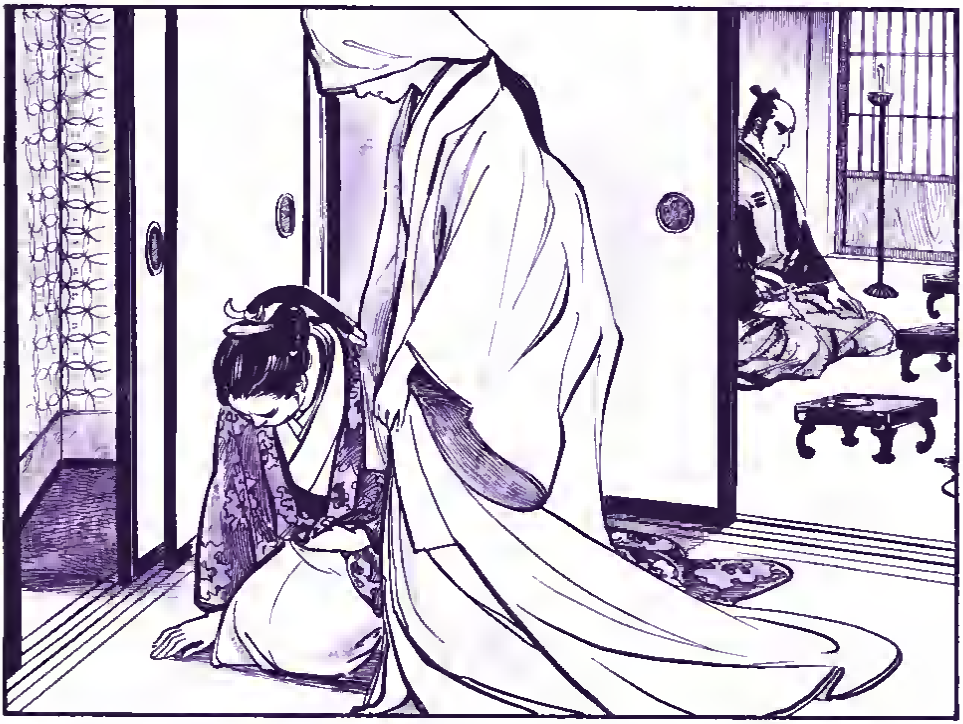
Everyone sitting in the room warped their noses in response to the disgusting stench permeating throughout it, suffering as they waited patiently for the ordeal to end...
It is extremely difficult for a common warrior to take the hand of a daimyo's daughter, without any special help.

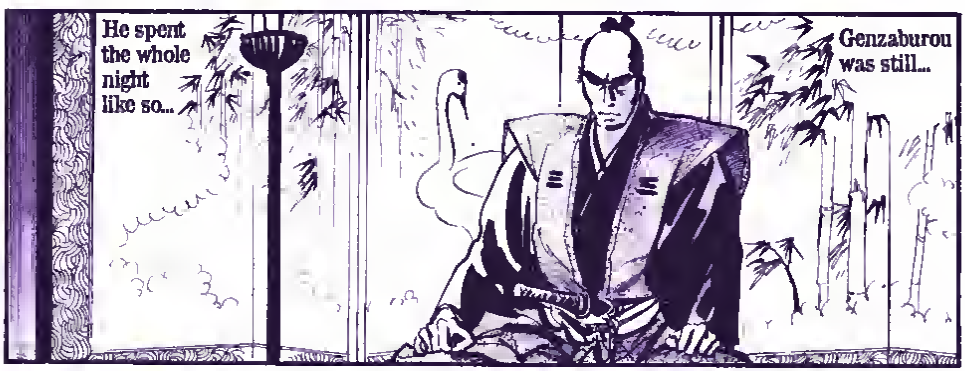
Some were unable to keep holding down the bile building in their throats and threw it up as they ran. Others behind, thinking solely of getting out of the room as quickly as possible, did not make a single attempt to dodge the vomit, stomping right through it. Socks and clothes were soiled while people continued to flee the room, as if a war had broken out within.
Praying every minute for the ceremony to finish up, they drank hardly any sake during the banquet, then kicked up their seats and dashed out of the room.


The lady bore it...


The sadness of having a celebration in which no one truly wanted to take part...


Finally opening her mouth and inviting the two to make their way to the sleeping quarters where they would seal their pact.
One old woman stayed with her...




He spent the whole night like so...
Genzaburou was still...

From now on, I will be known not as a lady of noble birth, but as the wife of Sir Sasahara Genzaburou. I will live with all my might, so please do not worry about me... thank you so much.
I will leave now. Thank you for taking care of me so long.
My Lady...

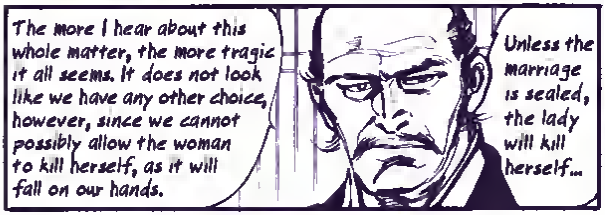
Call in Sasahara.
Sir!
Bring me Genza-burou!
Come closer.
It is I, Sasahara.

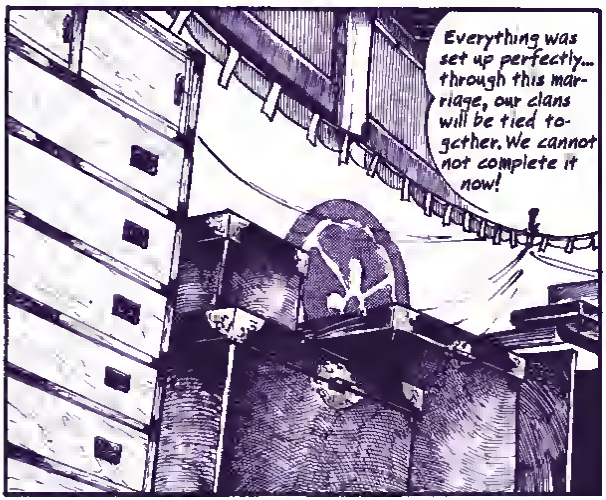
It is a very important favor that concerns the honor of our clan.
We are taking this opportunity to ask a favor of you.
She is the daughter of the leader of a neighboring clan.
We want you to take her as a wife.
A noble?!
In any case, she's the daughter of a high-ranking family who is now in control.
One could call her that.

That's the rub.
But why am I to receive her?
Hohh...
Some time ago, the young master went to meet with her in order to schedule a marriage, but the stench ended up being so painful that it left him bedridden for five days.
Apparently, this woman's armpits happen to give off an atrocious stench...
the young master refuses to accept her...
Therefore, no matter if the parents of both clans give the permission,
It seems that the young master is so against marrying her that he has threatened to commit suicide if he is forced to...
But...
The date for the marriage is still scheduled, however. We simply can't tell them that the marriage is canceled at this stage.

Distressed over this, the lady tried to kill herself this time, and not only just a couple times.
Leaving us with our current conditions...

They replied that they have tried using numerous medicines from other areas in order to cure her, but nothing has worked.
Left with no other choice, I told this to the neighboring clan

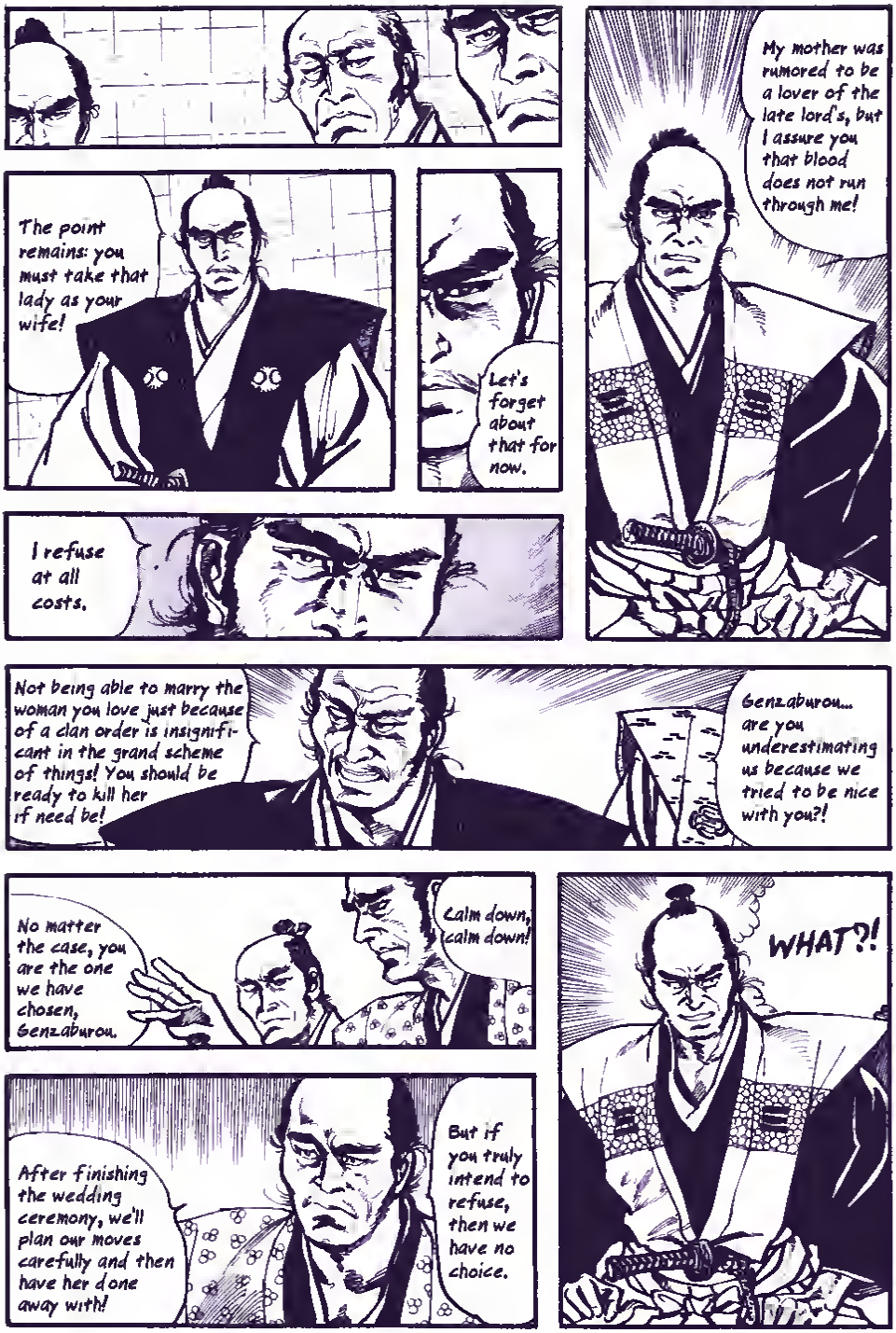

The more I hear about this whole matter, the more tragic it all seems. It does not look like we have any other choice, however, since we cannot possibly allow the woman to kill herself, as it will fall on our hands.
Unless the marriage is sealed, the lady will kill herself...


Everything was set up perfectly... through this marriage, our clans will be tied together. We cannot not complete it now!

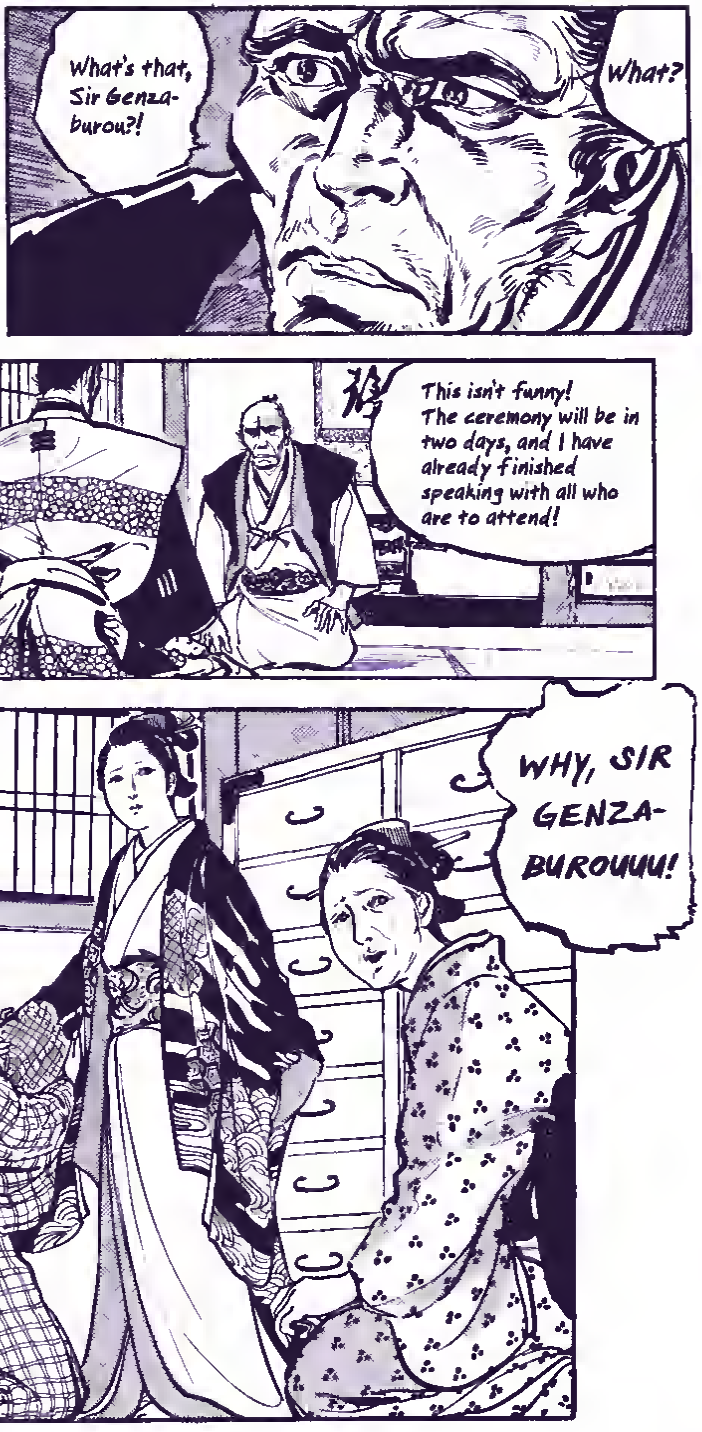
I don't care who out of all the retainers is chosen, I just want a willing groom.
If the young master insists on refusing to marry her, it's unavoidable.

Yes.
So that's why you called me.
I see.
for I have already found the right woman to take as my bride.
I must respectfully decline,
It must be a retainer... we couldn't select a mere foot soldier or some other commoner, as we also have respect toward the neighboring clan to think about.
That's why, after reviewing all the possible candidates, we arrived on you.
Sasahara!
What?
Well, Genzaburou?!
Are you saying you're going to ignore a favor that will save the clan's honor?

Well, say something, dammit!
There's no reason to think more than necessary about this. You can think of the lady as nothing more than a wife under formalities, and continue loving the women you truly have feelings for. There's nothing wrong with that... so? You can answer now, can't you?
Genzaburou...
Now, now...
It's only natural that he's reluctant. No one would want a wife that stinks, after all.
If this is only a matter of formalities, then why me...? Why don't you just do it yourself, then?
Elder!
Why not?!
I'm sorry, but that can't happen.
FLINCH!
ピク!
That's enough of that!
You are stepbrother to the young master, and that is why it must be you.


The point remains: you must take that lady as your wife!
Let's forget about that for now.
I refuse at all costs.
My mother was rumored to be a lover of the late lord's, but I assure you that blood does not run through me!
Not being able to marry the woman you love just because of a clan order is insignificant in the grand scheme of things! You should be ready to kill her if need be!
Genzaburou... are you underestimating us because we tried to be nice with you?!
No matter the case, you are the one we have chosen, Genzaburou.
Calm down, calm down!
After finishing the wedding ceremony, we'll plan our moves carefully and then have her done away with!
But if you truly intend to refuse, then we have no choice.
WHAT?!

And then we will report to the neighboring clan that the two of you eloped.
Of course, you will be banished from this land afterwards.
What did you say?!
What?!
It's decided, Genzaburou!
.....
After things have died down, we will allow you to change your name, return to the clan, and marry the woman of your choice. Now how does that sound, Genzaburou?
緒方
OGATA


What's that, Sir Genza-burou?!
What?
And now you ask me to postpone it? Why? Why, I say?!
This isn't funny! The ceremony will be in two days, and I have already finished speaking with all who are to attend!
WHY, SIR GENZA-BUROUUU!

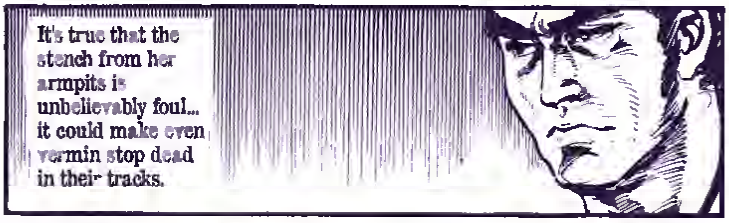
I obstinately refused, but as it is an official order, there was nothing I can do.
Yes.
Then that means...
I'll go discuss things with them!
Those Chief Retainers... have they no mercy?!
You'll simply be punished for going against the clan's wishes. Nothing good will come of it!
Wait, Hikokurou!
But Father!

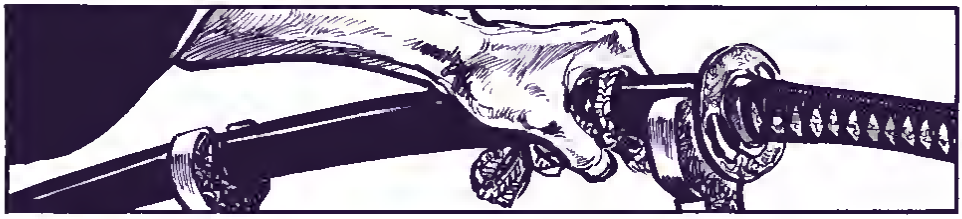
So... how long must we postpone it for...?
CREAK
THREE YEARS?!
!

Then after things have died down... after three years...
After the ceremony is finished, I must kill the lady.
A noble lady?
If you don't, then what...?

I must ask you to wait three years... after three years, I promise to come back for you.
Lady Kaede...
Yes...

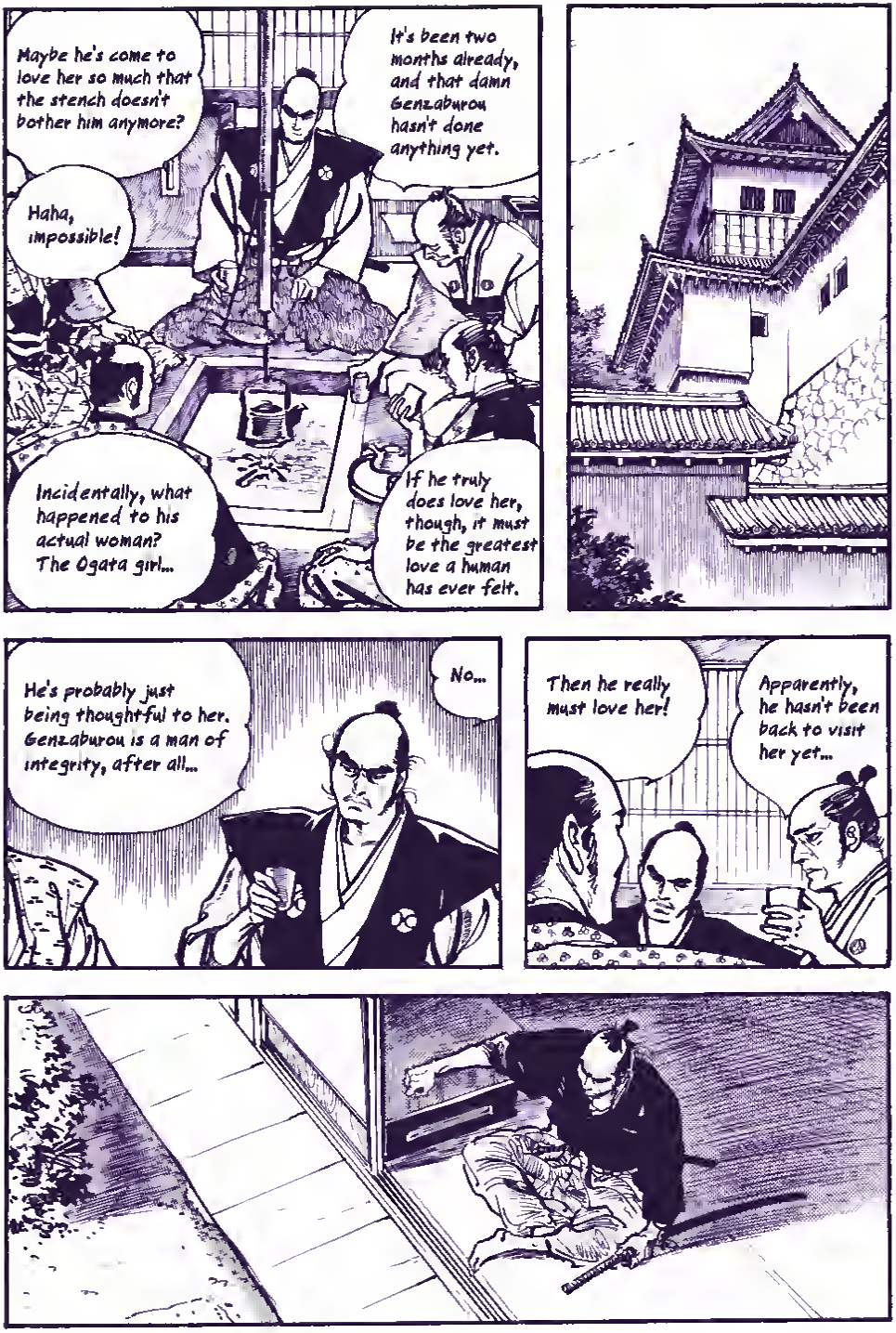
After an extravagant ceremony, and things had calmed down, his heart became overcast...
Genzaburou married the noble lady two weeks later.


It's true that the stench from her armpits is unbelievably foul... it could make even vermin stop dead in their tracks.

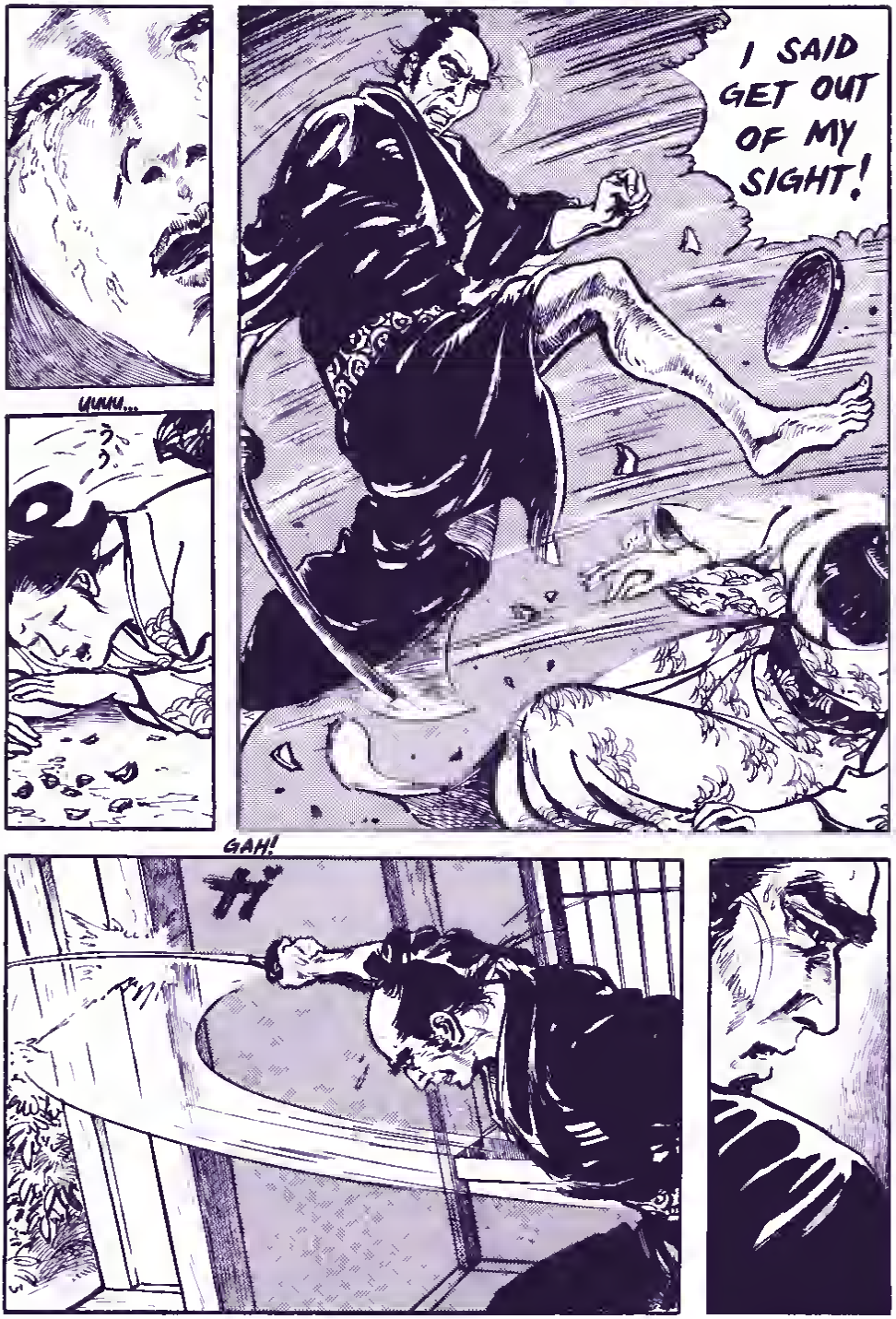


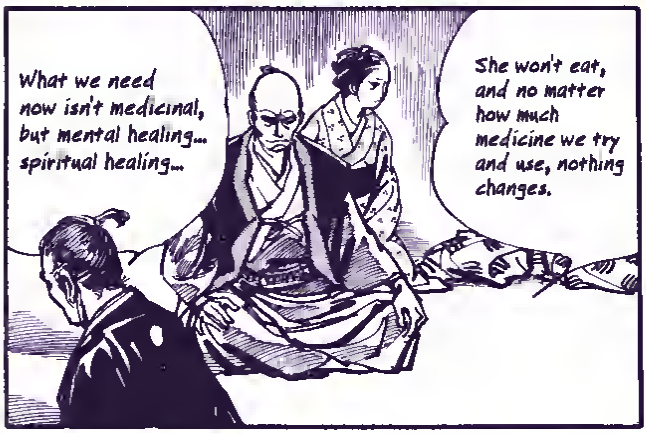
Despite coming from a noble background, she was modest and reserved – which only deepened her pitiable nature.
But realizing her situation, the woman acted humble and worked hard to make things easier for her husband...

バチッ
QUIVER
JOBS LIKE THAT... MUST BE DONE BY THE SERVANTS!!
YES, SIR...


Maybe he's come to love her so much that the stench doesn't bother him anymore?
It's been two months already, and that damn Genzaburou hasn't done anything yet.
Haha, impossible!
Incidentally, what happened to his actual woman? The Ogata girl...
If he truly does love her, though, it must be the greatest love a human has ever felt.
He's probably just being thoughtful to her. Genzaburou is a man of integrity, after all...
No...
Then he really must love her!
Apparently, he hasn't been back to visit her yet...

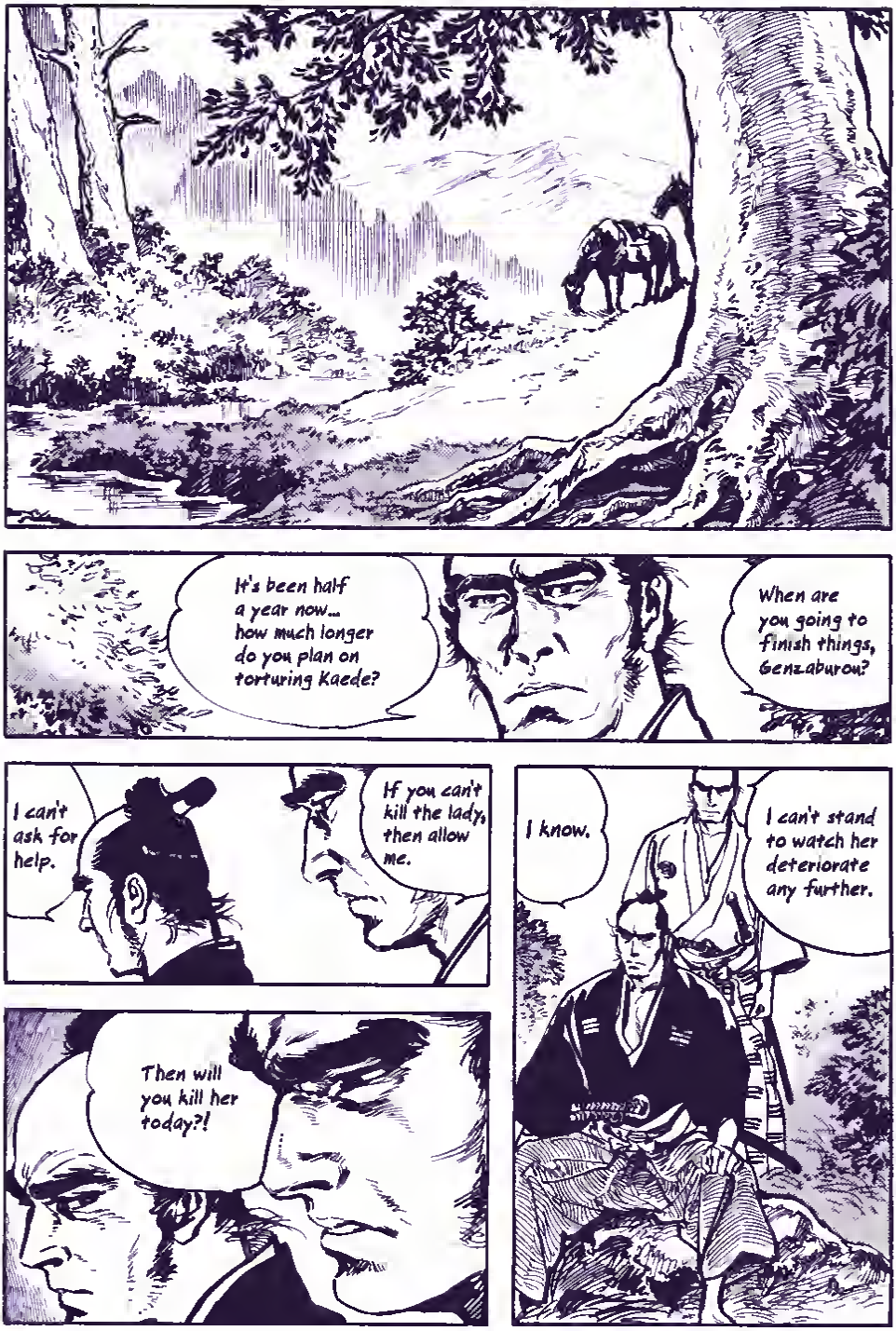
GET OUT OF MY SIGHT, YOU FILTHY WOMAN! YOU'LL CORRODE MY NOSE!
BAKIH


I SAID GET OUT OF MY SIGHT!
UUUU...
GAH!

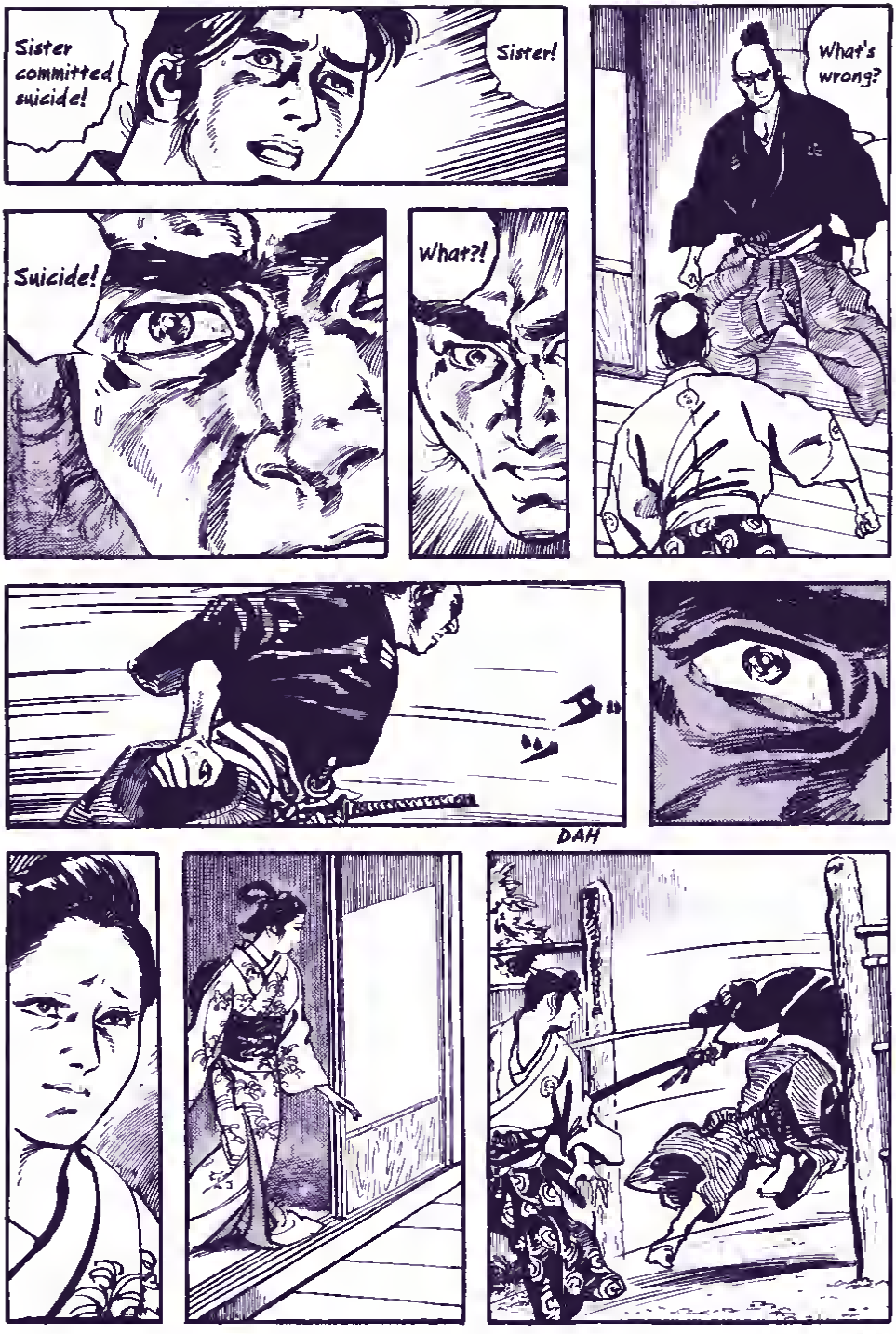

What we need now isn't medicinal, but mental healing... spiritual healing...
She won't eat, and no matter how much medicine we try and use, nothing changes.

Things are getting worse and worse...

Ever since the marriage, Kaede-sama has refused to eat anything, and seems to be nothing more than a body waiting for death!
Did you hear, Ohama-san?
That doesn't surprise me... after the marriage was decided, the poor thing religiously counted down the days until she would become Genzaburou-sama's wife...


It's been half a year now... how much longer do you plan on torturing Kaede?
When are you going to finish things, Genzaburou?
I can't ask for help.
If you can't kill the lady, then allow me.
I know.
I can't stand to watch her deteriorate any further.
Then will you kill her today?!

She's here...
I'm giving you a letter of divorce.
SIR GENZA-BUROU!
SIR GENZA-BUROU!


Sister committed suicide!
Sister!
What's wrong?
Suicide!
What?!
DAH

No matter how tied up you may have been with the lady, you should have come to visit her in secret.

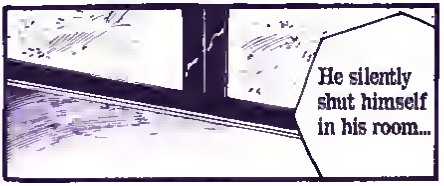
Her foul stench has seeped into my body! I didn't want to make her smell it!
DON'T TELL ME THAT NOW!

Nothing more...
I don't want to hear any more about this.

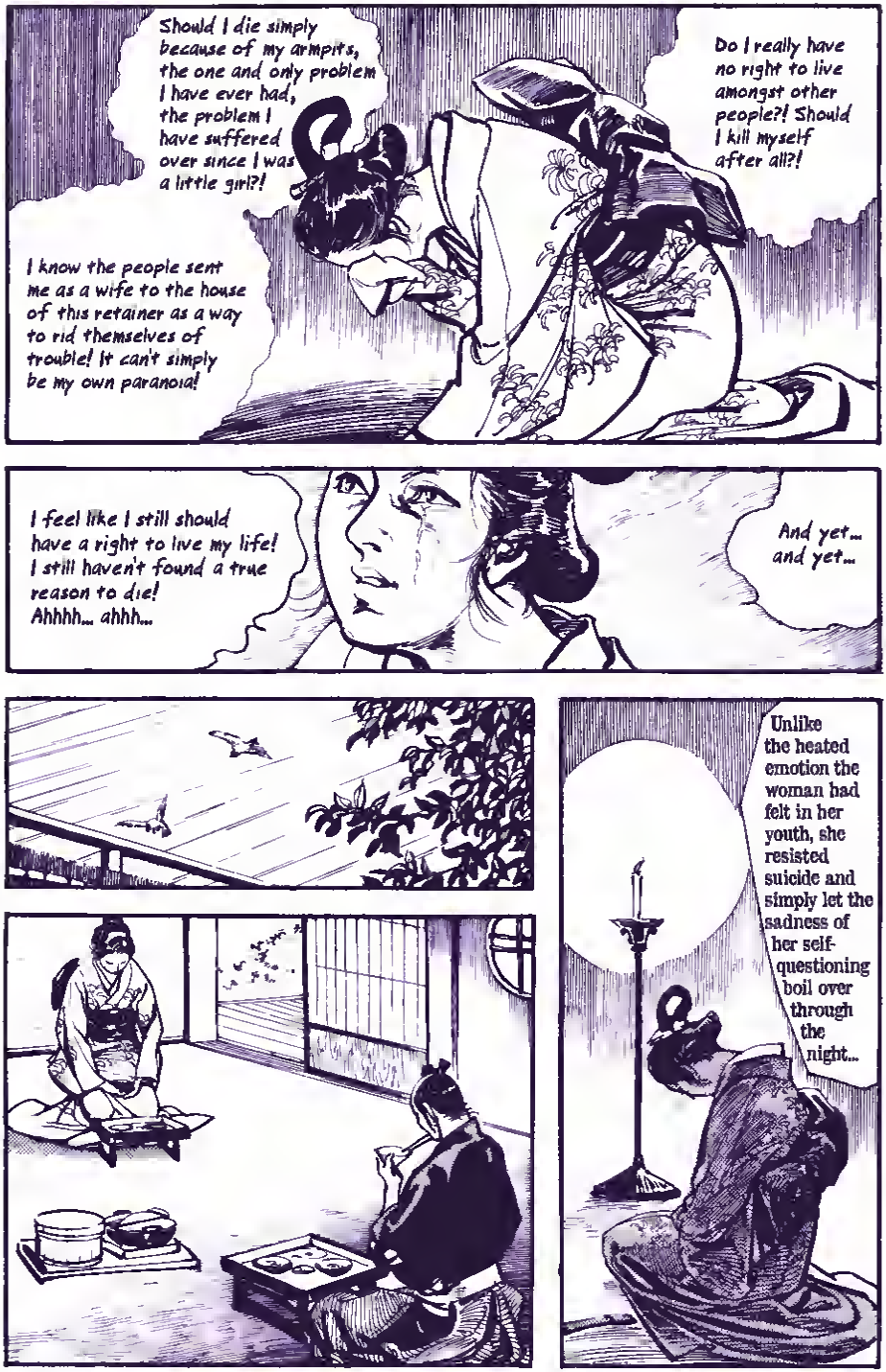
Just allow me this one comment: I believe it's clear that Kaede died because she truly loved you too much...
No matter what anyone says now, it will only sound like an idle complaint, but...

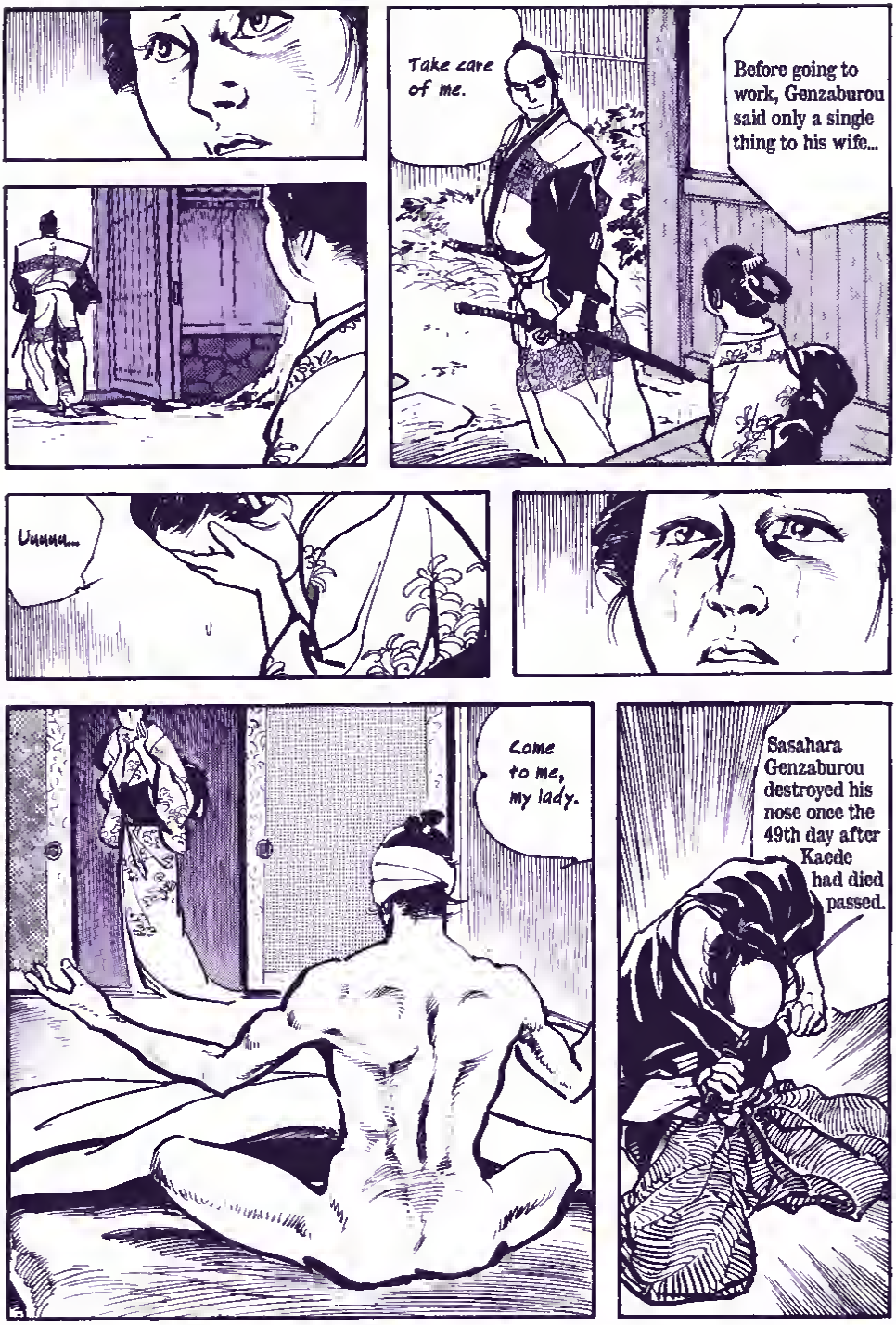
leaving the lady with no place to put herself...

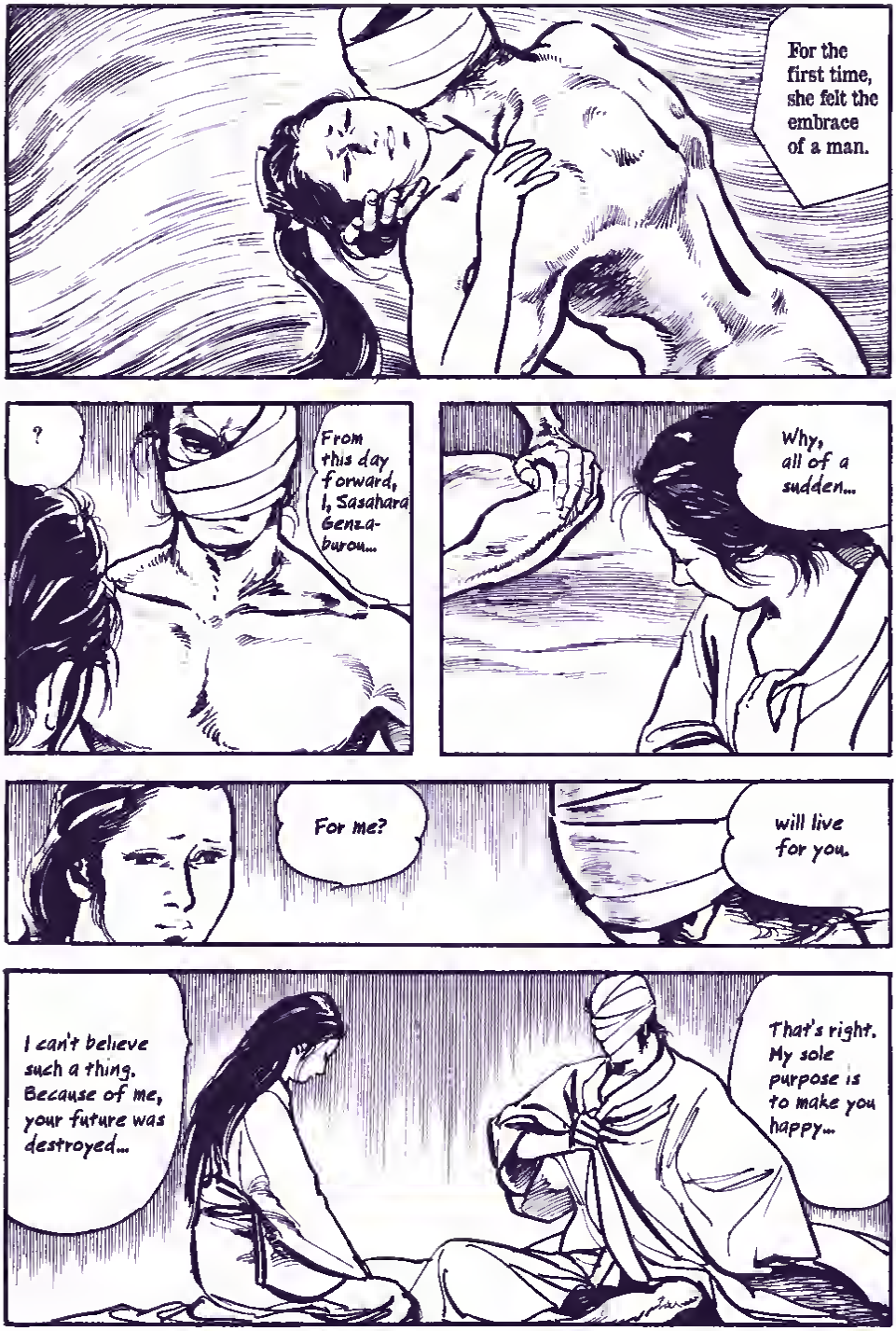
was unable to hide his grave expression and heavy footsteps...


He silently shut himself in his room...

After returning home, Genzaburou...

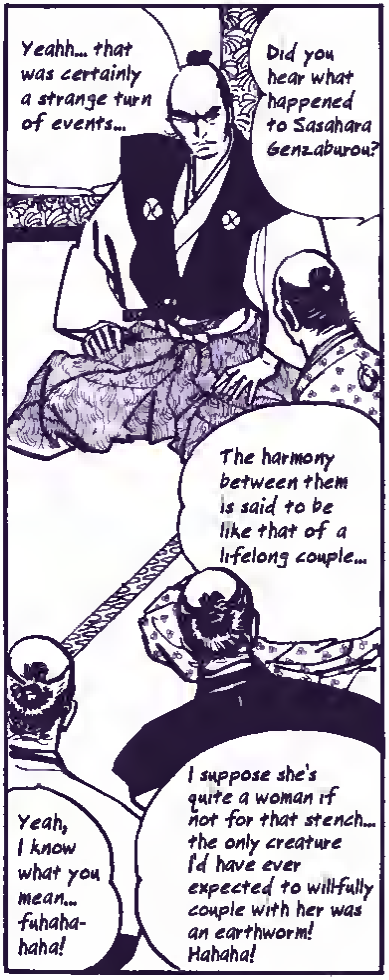

Should I die simply because of my armpits, the one and only problem I have ever had, the problem I have suffered over since I was a little girl?!
Do I really have no right to live amongst other people?! Should I kill myself after all?!
I know the people sent me as a wife to the house of this retainer as a way to rid themselves of trouble! It can't simply be my own paranoia!
I feel like I still should have a right to live my life! I still haven't found a true reason to die! Ahhhh... ahhh...
And yet... and yet...
Unlike the heated emotion the woman had felt in her youth, she resisted suicide and simply let the sadness of her self-questioning boil over through the night...


Take care of me.
Before going to work, Genzaburou said only a single thing to his wife...
Uuuuu...
Come to me, my lady.
Sasahara Genzaburou destroyed his nose once the 49th day after Kaede had died passed.


For the first time, she felt the embrace of a man.
?
From this day forward, I, Sasahara Genza-burou...
Why, all of a sudden...
For me?
will live for you.
I can't believe such a thing. Because of me, your future was destroyed...
That's right. My sole purpose is to make you happy...

.....
No matter what.

If you can't believe me, that's fine. But I promise, without a doubt, to bring you joy and happiness.


Yeahh... that was certainly a strange turn of events...
Did you hear what happened to Sasahara Genzaburou?
The harmony between them is said to be like that of a lifelong couple...
I suppose she's quite a woman if not for that stench... the only creature I'd have ever expected to willfully couple with her was an earthworm! Hahaha!
Yeah, I know what you mean... fuhaha-haha!

Genzaburou, I want my sister's head back.
...It's been a while, Ogata Hikokurou.
Hello.
So you are here, Genza-burou!
WHAT?!
A young priest at the temple said he looked just like you. Your seal case was also found in the dirt. We know that you took her head home with you.
After she was transferred to Hokuzen Temple, it was discovered that her grave had been dug up and that her head was missing. After investigating, we found out that a man had been seen hanging around the gravesite the night following her burial...

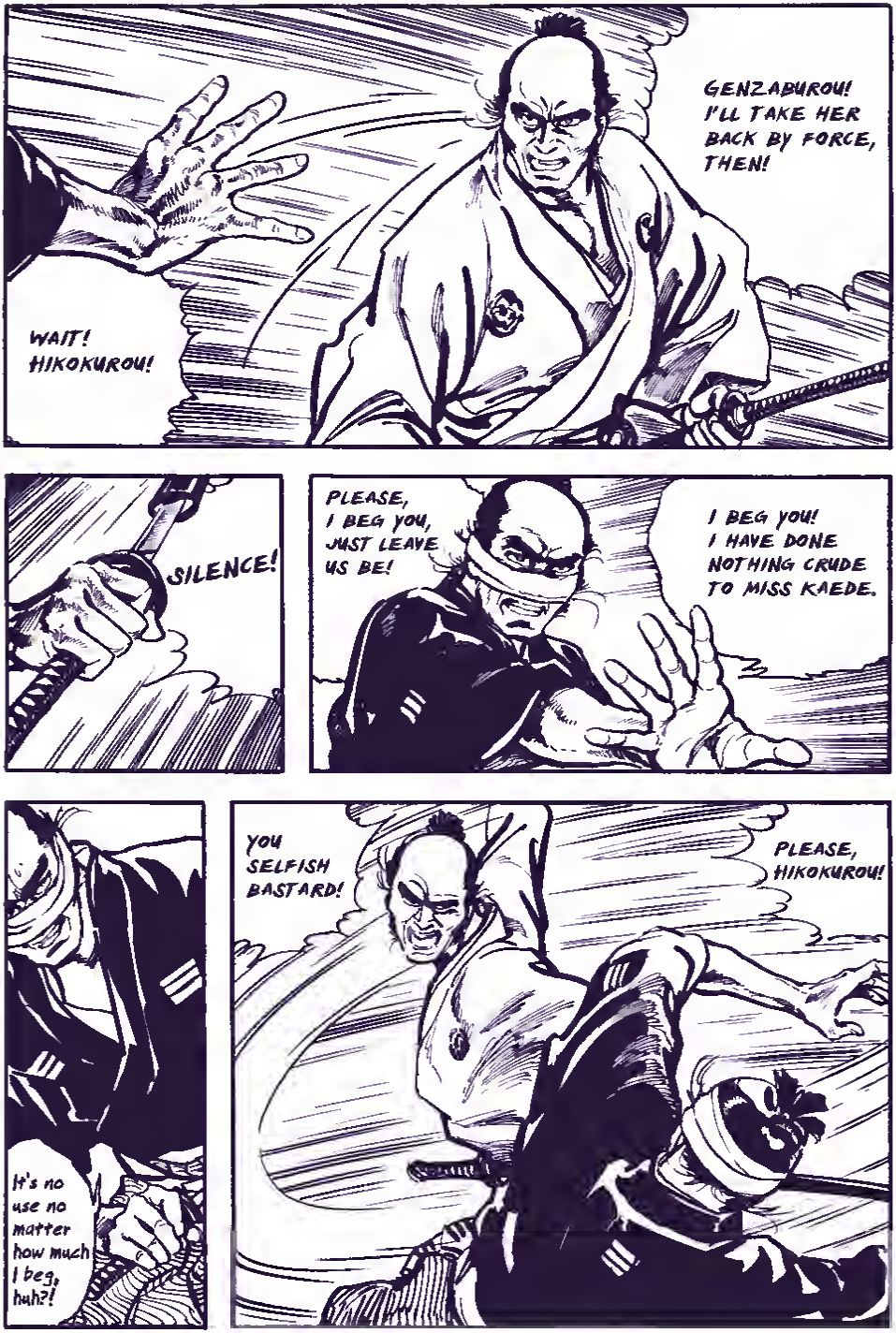
That's why my brothers and I kept silent up until now.
I suspect that Kaede would probably want her head to be taken by the man she died from loving.

After recent developments, however, we want it back. We feel too sorry for her, so will you return her?

Then we'll take your lady in return...
If you truly insist...

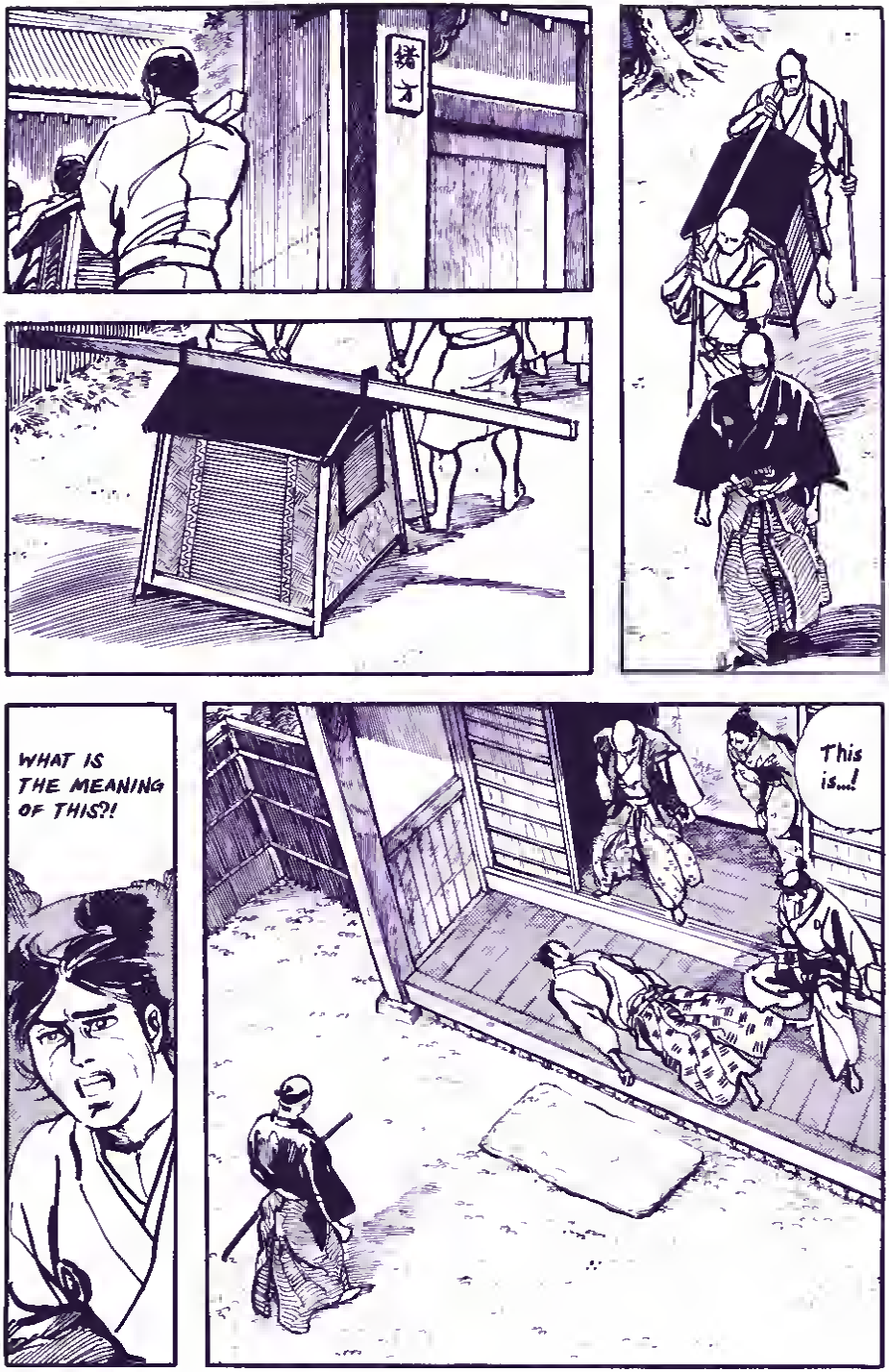
You cannot do that.

I will not.


GENZABUROU! I'LL TAKE HER BACK BY FORCE, THEN!
WAIT! HIKOKUROU!
SILENCE!
PLEASE, I BEG YOU, JUST LEAVE US BE!
I BEG YOU! I HAVE DONE NOTHING CRUDE TO MISS KAEDE.
It's no use no matter how much I beg, huh?!
YOU SELFISH BASTARD!
PLEASE, HIKOKUROU!

This is all a result of the clan forcing their order on you...
You have turned into a devil who violates the dead.
BASUH
ドズッ
DOTAH
ゴーッ

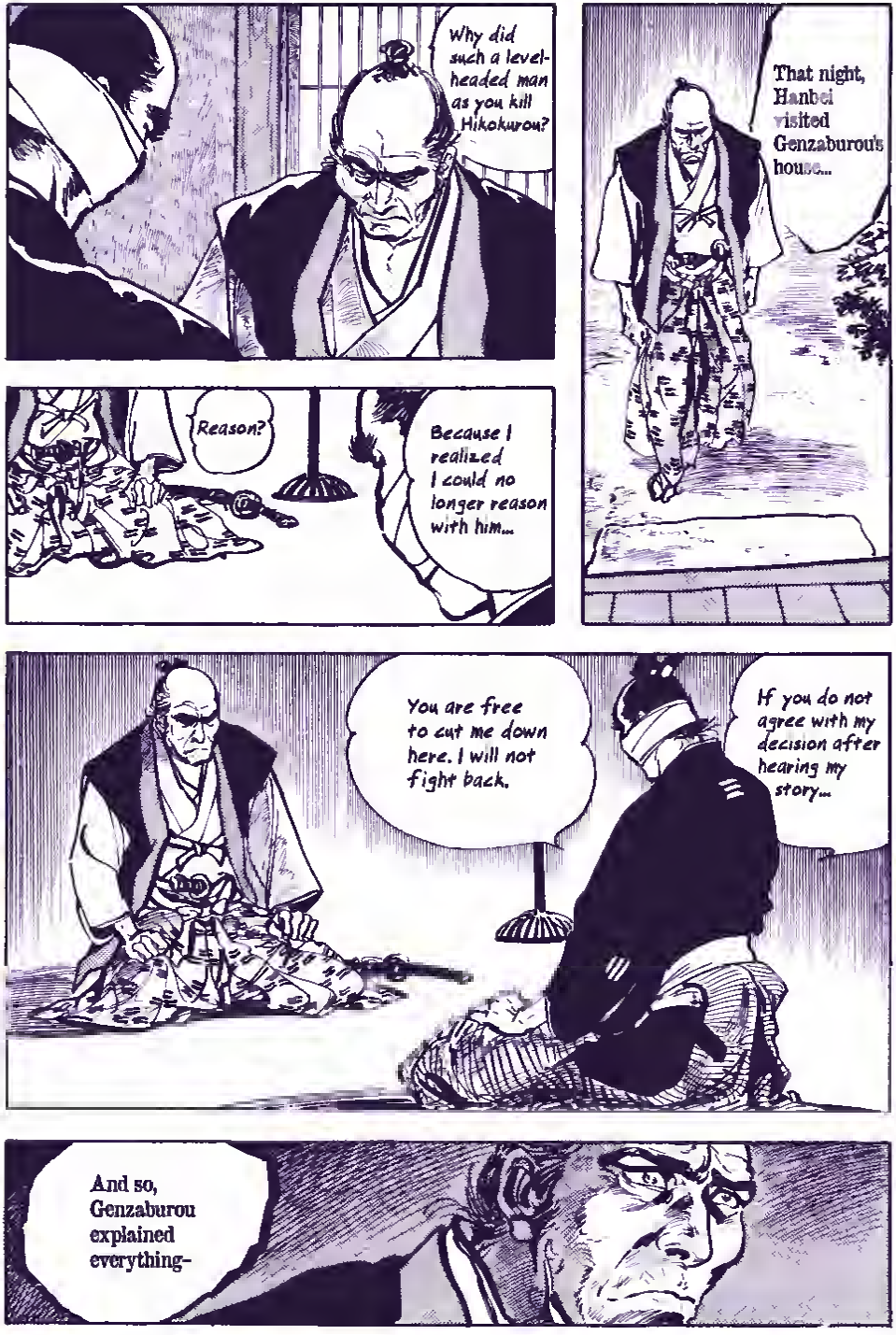
Lady,
It's true that I have hidden her head...
If I had simply returned it, this may not have happened... but... I cannot do so...
.....

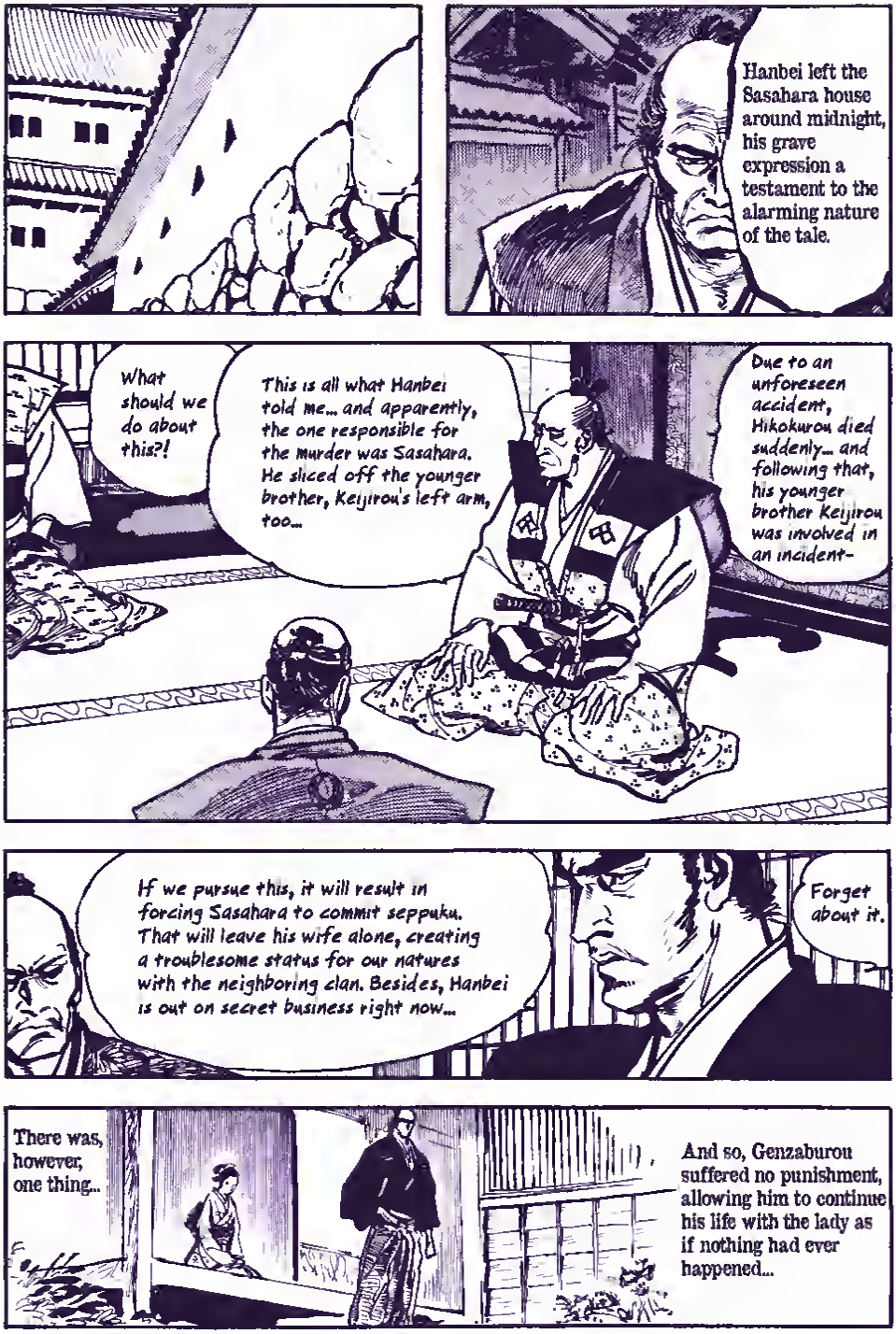

WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THIS?!
This is...!

What?!
I killed him...
CHA!
Shut up! Not only did you violate my sister's corpse, but now you killed my elder brother!
Stop!
Wait.
Do not throw away your life!
Remove your hand from that sword.

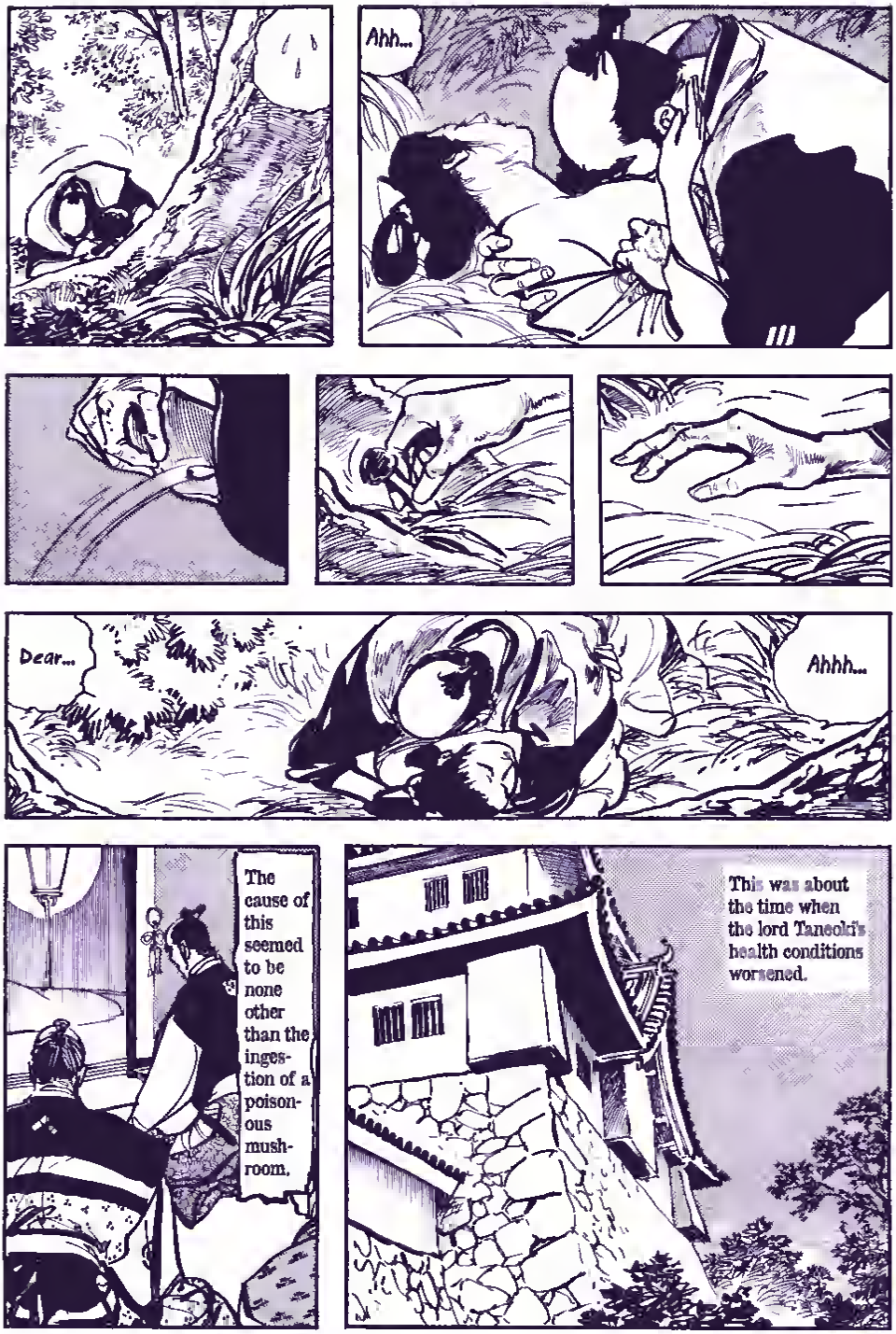
Therefore, please wait until then.
I will allow you to do so one day.
Although... I know it must be hard to go without killing your brother's murderer.
I beg you, please cooperate with me.

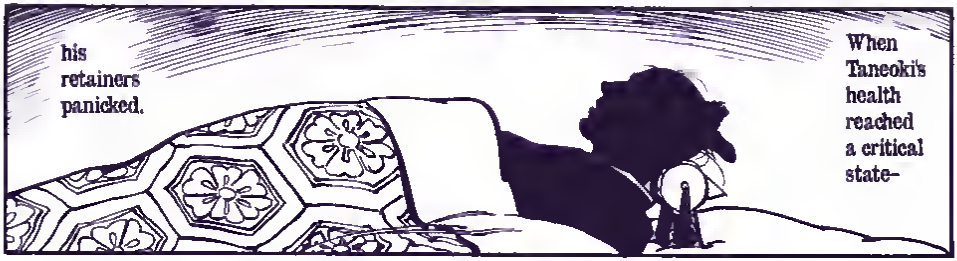
KEIJIROUUU!
NUUU!
ぬう!
BAH
UHHHHHHHHH!


Why did such a level-headed man as you kill Hikokurou?
That night, Hanbei visited Genzaburou's house...
Reason?
Because I realized I could no longer reason with him...
You are free to cut me down here. I will not fight back.
If you do not agree with my decision after hearing my story...
And so, Genzaburou explained everything-


Hanbei left the Sasahara house around midnight, his grave expression a testament to the alarming nature of the tale.
What should we do about this?!
This is all what Hanbei told me... and apparently, the one responsible for the murder was Sasahara. He sliced off the younger brother, Keijirou's left arm, too...
Due to an unforeseen accident, Hikokurou died suddenly... and following that, his younger brother Keijirou was involved in an incident-
If we pursue this, it will result in forcing Sasahara to commit seppuku. That will leave his wife alone, creating a troublesome status for our natures with the neighboring clan. Besides, Hanbei is out on secret business right now...
Forget about it.
There was, however, one thing...
And so, Genzaburou suffered no punishment, allowing him to continue his life with the lady as if nothing had ever happened...

Lady... are you happy?
Sometimes when he was off duty, he would take his wife for a stroll through the mountains.
That... will make me happier...
Please call me Hatsu.
No one's watching.
Ah... in a place like this?!
Hatsu!

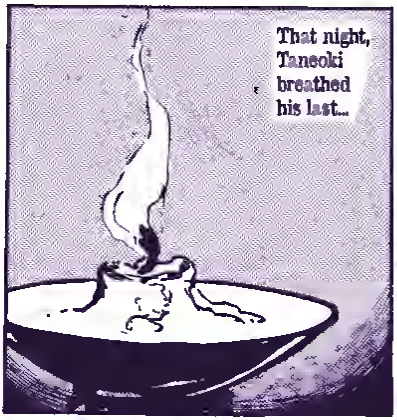

Ahh...
Dear...
Ahhh...
The cause of this seemed to be none other than the ingestion of a poisonous mushroom.
This was about the time when the lord Taneoki's health conditions worsened.

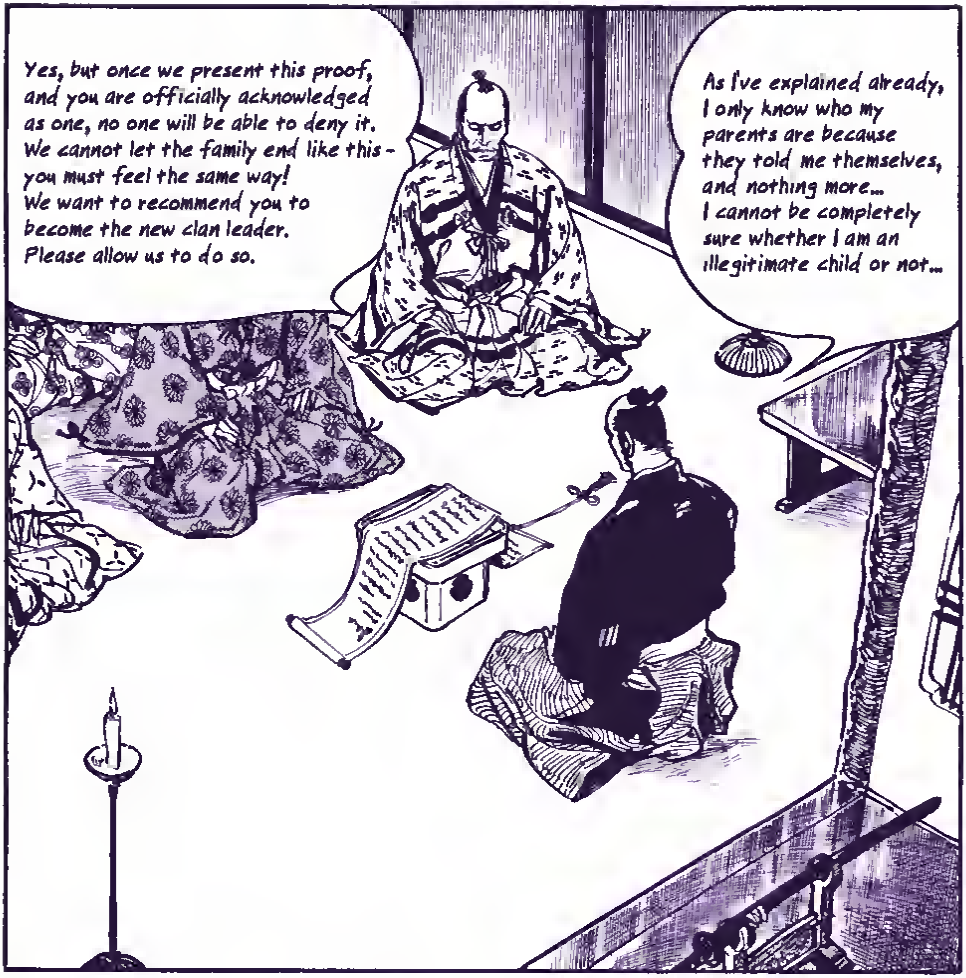

his retainers panicked.
When Taneoki's health reached a critical state–

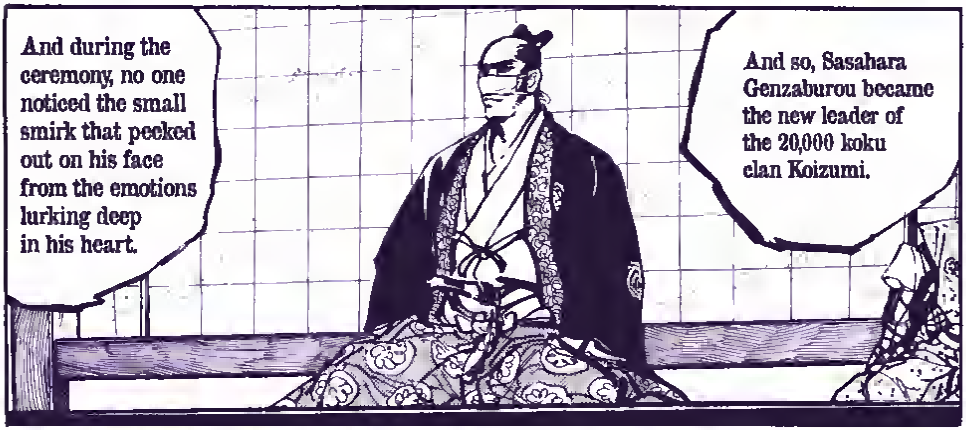
At this rate the family line will end! We will lose our houses and status, become nothing but vagrants!
They had not yet found a proper successor.

If we don't act fast, this entire family will be cut off!
Whether or not Genzaburou is truly the illegitimate child of the family line or not, we can always create some proof later!
Yes, this is an emergency situation! We need to find a successor as soon as possible and then appeal to the government...

The Chief Retainers gathered together and headed to Genzaburou's house.


That night, Taneoki breathed his last...

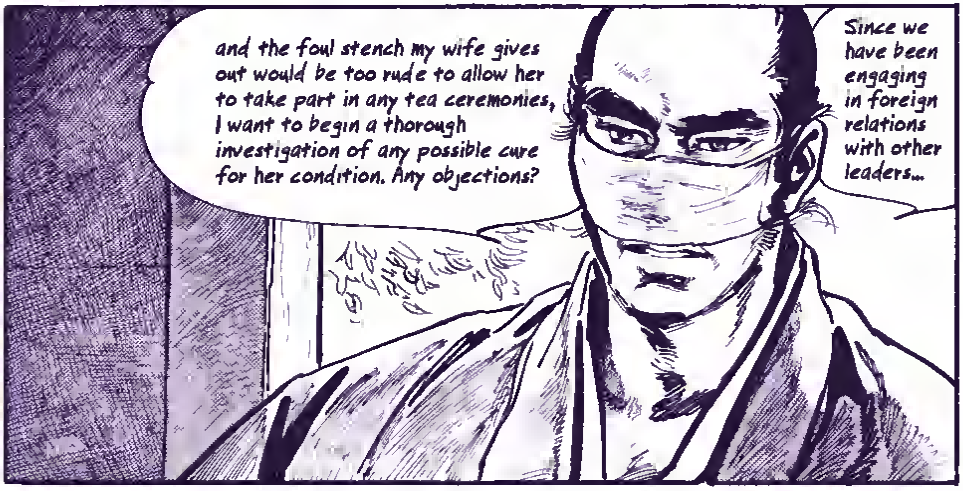

Yes, but once we present this proof, and you are officially acknowledged as one, no one will be able to deny it. We cannot let the family end like this - you must feel the same way! We want to recommend you to become the new clan leader. Please allow us to do so.
As I've explained already, I only know who my parents are because they told me themselves, and nothing more... I cannot be completely sure whether I am an illegitimate child or not...


And during the ceremony, no one noticed the small smirk that pecked out on his face from the emotions lurking deep in his heart.
And so, Sasahara Genzaburou became the new leader of the 20,000 koku clan Koizumi.

Since he had been no more than a tool for them to escape a possible crisis, once things settled down they merely shelved him like any other.
The Chief Retainers did not intend to give Genzaburou even the smallest bit of control over the clan's politics.

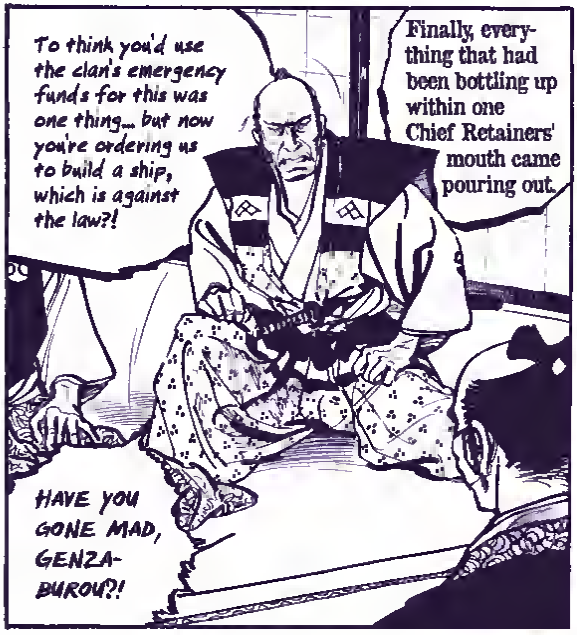
One day, Genzaburou gathered up these Chief Retainers and told them something...

There may have even been some Chief Retainers plotting to impregnate Hatsu with an illegitimate child themselves and then later take over the clan.


and the foul stench my wife gives out would be too rude to allow her to take part in any tea ceremonies, I want to begin a thorough investigation of any possible cure for her condition. Any objections?
Since we have been engaging in foreign relations with other leaders...

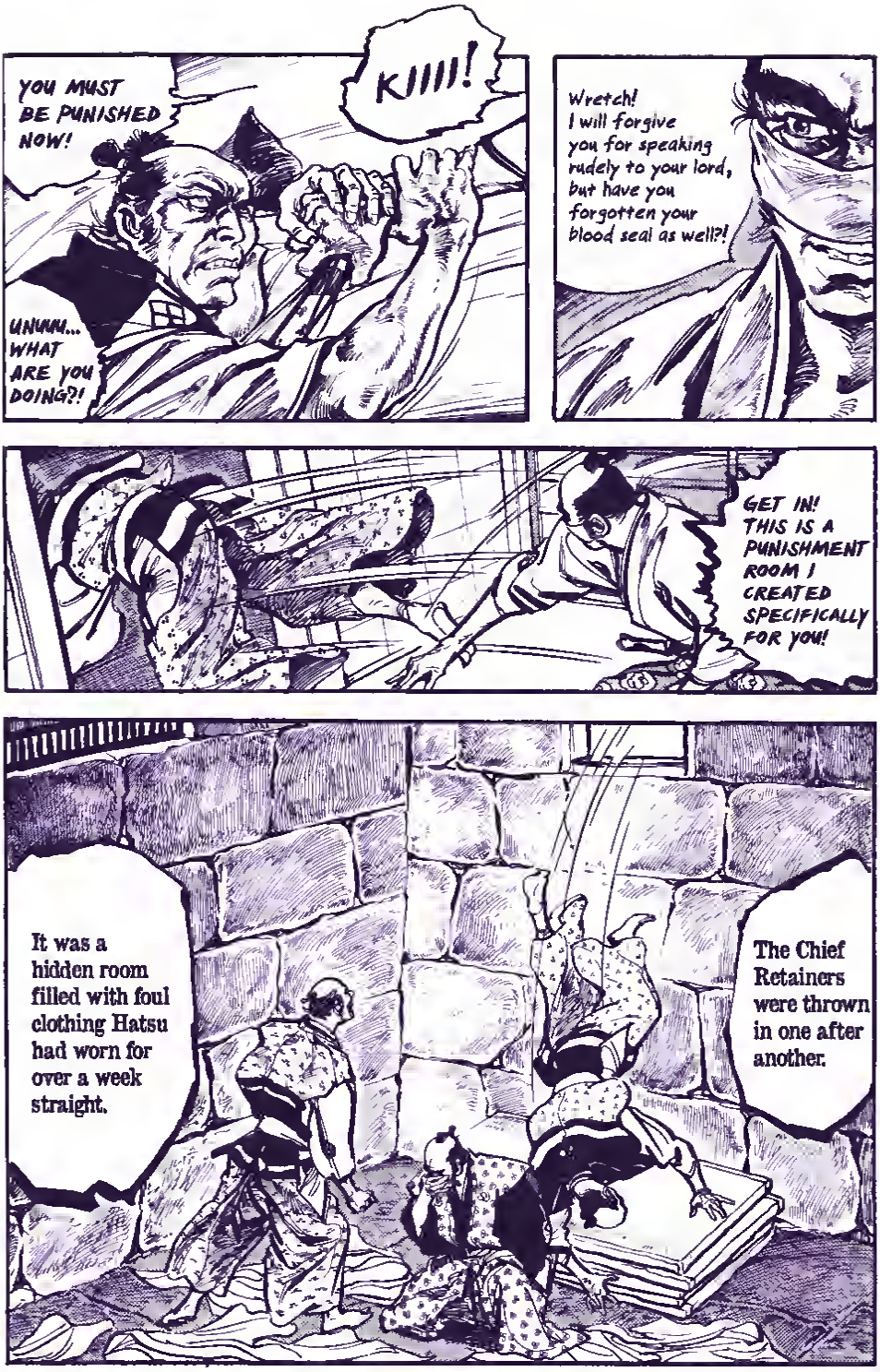
All of the Chief Retainers were unanimous in their agreement.
Of course, they couldn't say no.
I mentioned a thorough investigation, and I don't want any trouble from people going back on their words later...
Indeed.
Blood seal?!
Then please place your blood seal here.
Unbeliev-able...
grumble grumble...
Any who do raise objection are to receive punishment under clan law...
Now, as you can see here, I have all your blood seals on this scroll, so I never want to hear any complaints about what happens.

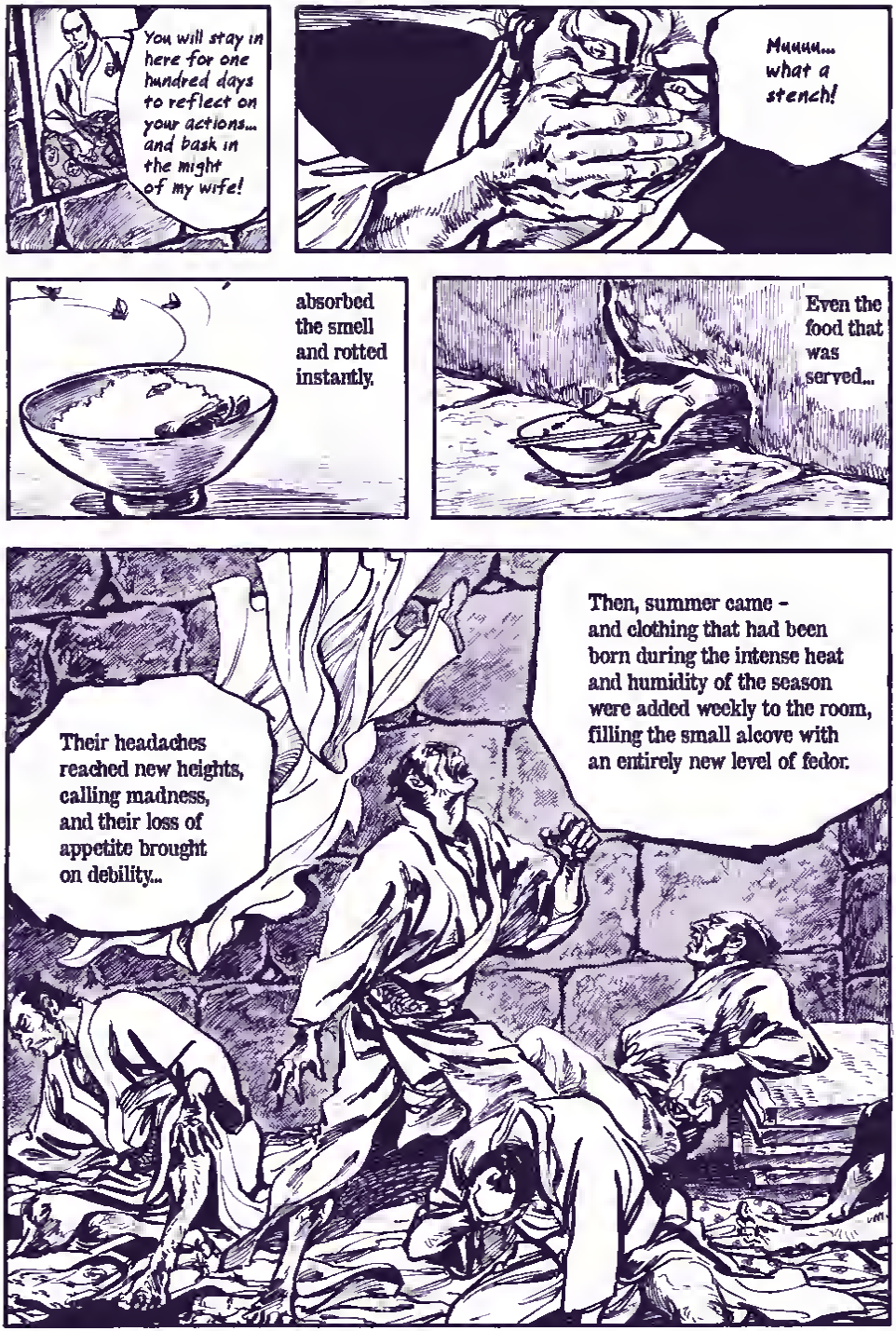
But no one could.
Afterwards, Genzaburou offered a thousand ryou up to any doctor across the land who could cure the woman's stench.

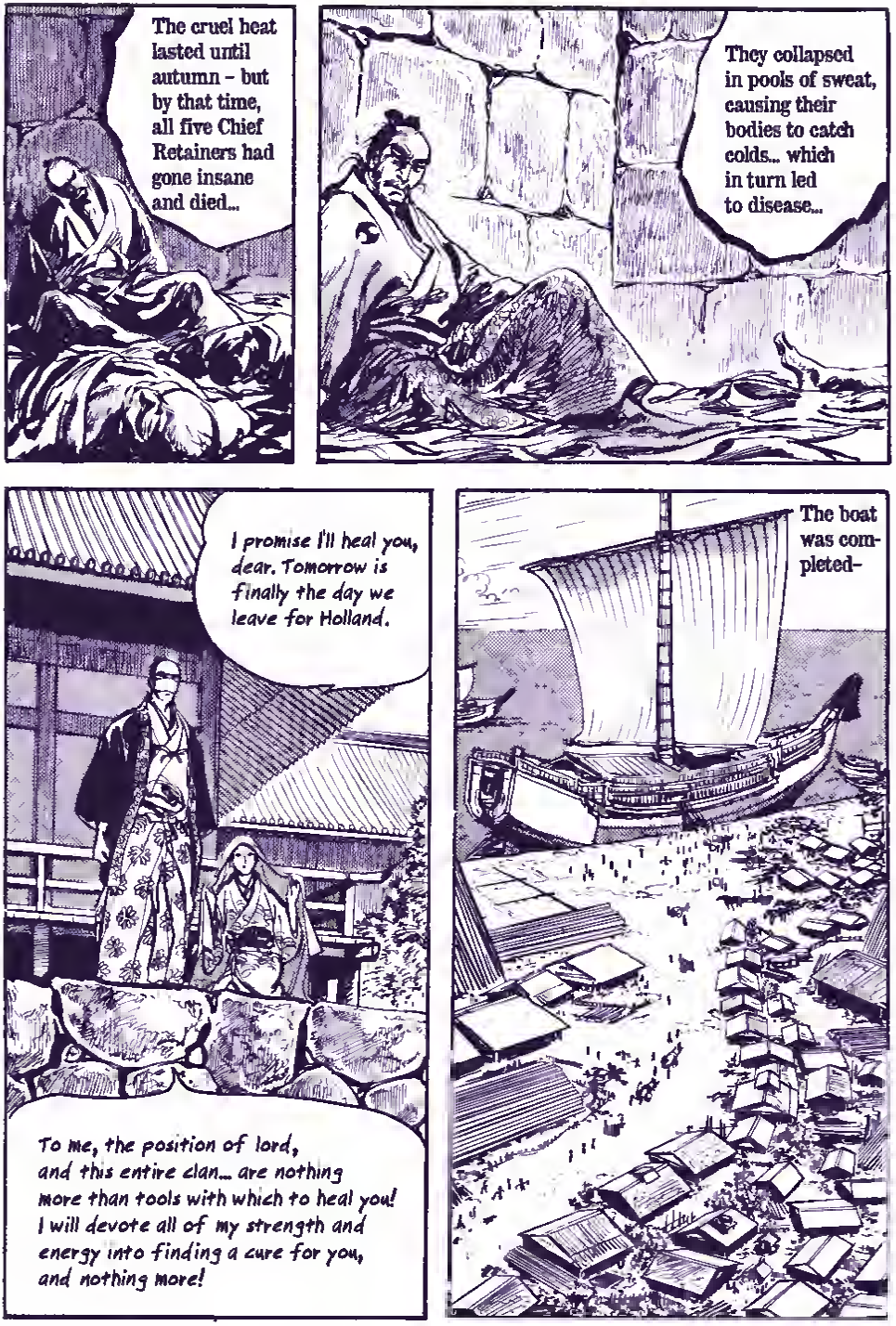

To think you'd use the clan's emergency funds for this was one thing... but now you're ordering us to build a ship, which is against the law?!
Finally, everything that had been bottling up within one Chief Retainers' mouth came pouring out.
HAVE YOU GONE MAD, GENZABUROU?!

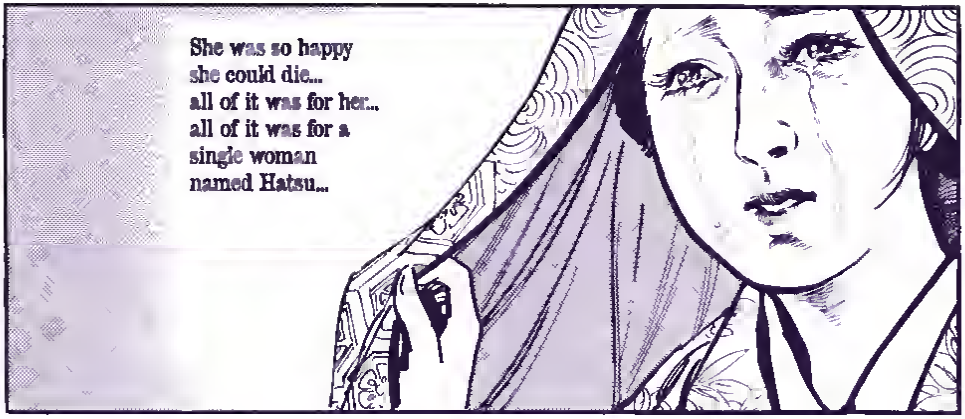
And so, Genzaburou ordered a boat to be made so that his wife could go to Holland.

One Dutch doctor claimed that he could using the equipment in his home country...


YOU MUST BE PUNISHED NOW!
KIIII!
UNUHH... WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!
Wretch! I will forgive you for speaking rudely to your lord, but have you forgotten your blood seal as well?!
GET IN! THIS IS A PUNISHMENT ROOM I CREATED SPECIFICALLY FOR YOU!
It was a hidden room filled with foul clothing Hatsu had worn for over a week straight.
The Chief Retainers were thrown in one after another.

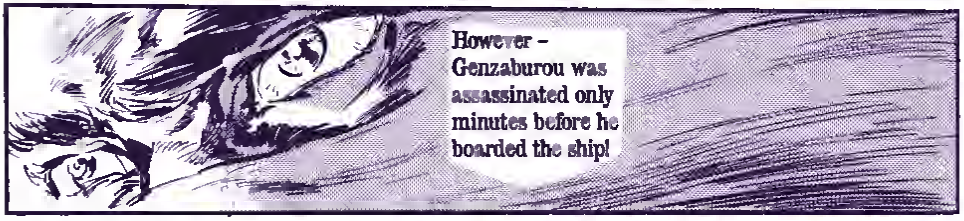

You will stay in here for one hundred days to reflect on your actions... and bask in the might of my wife!
Muuuu... what a stench!
absorbed the smell and rotted instantly.
Even the food that was served...
Their headaches reached new heights, calling madness, and their loss of appetite brought on debility...
Then, summer came - and clothing that had been born during the intense heat and humidity of the season were added weekly to the room, filling the small alcove with an entirely new level of fedor.

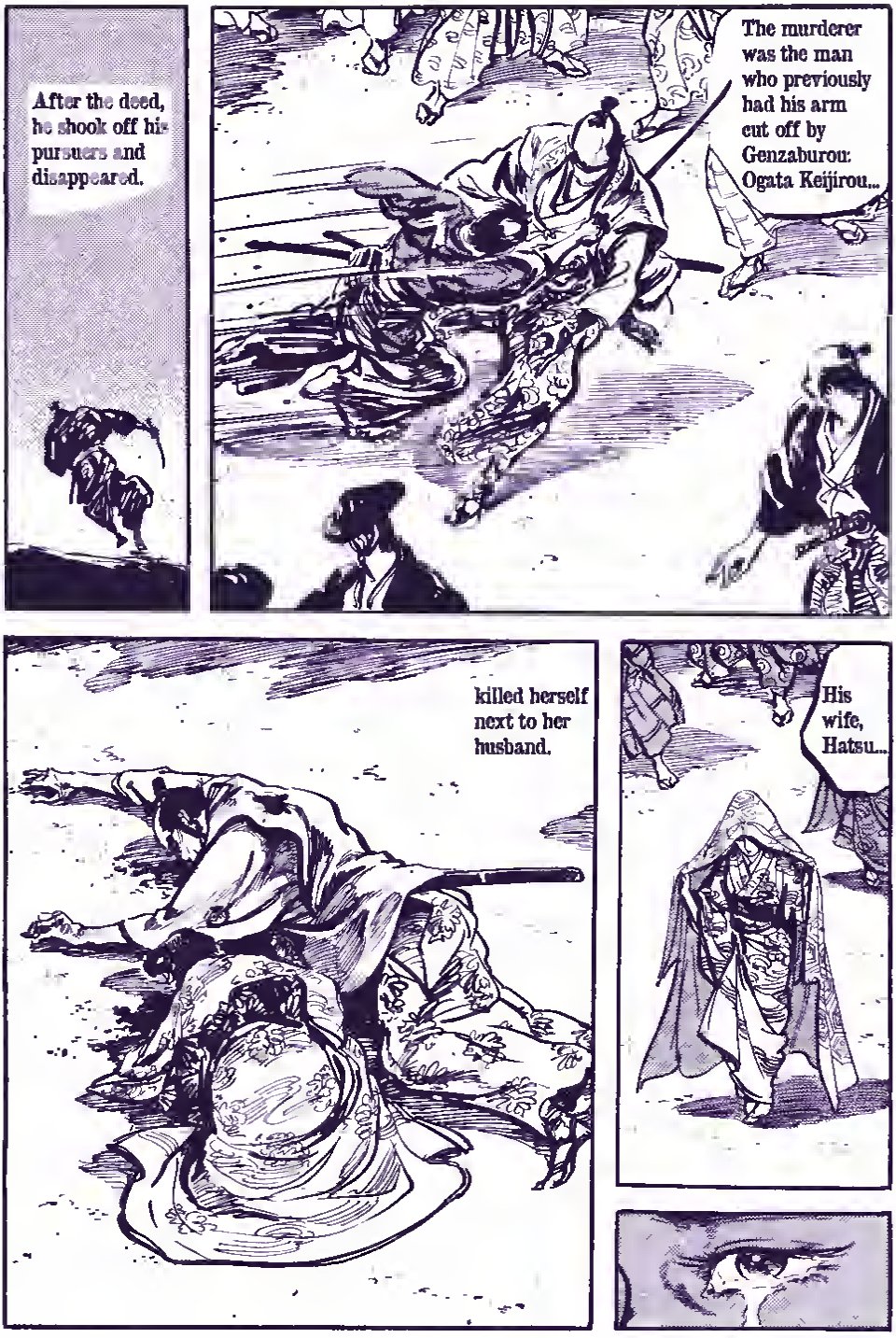

The cruel heat lasted until autumn – but by that time, all five Chief Retainers had gone insane and died...
They collapsed in pools of sweat, causing their bodies to catch colds... which in turn led to disease...
I promise I'll heal you, dear. Tomorrow is finally the day we leave for Holland.
To me, the position of lord, and this entire clan... are nothing more than tools with which to heal you! I will devote all of my strength and energy into finding a cure for you, and nothing more!
The boat was completed-

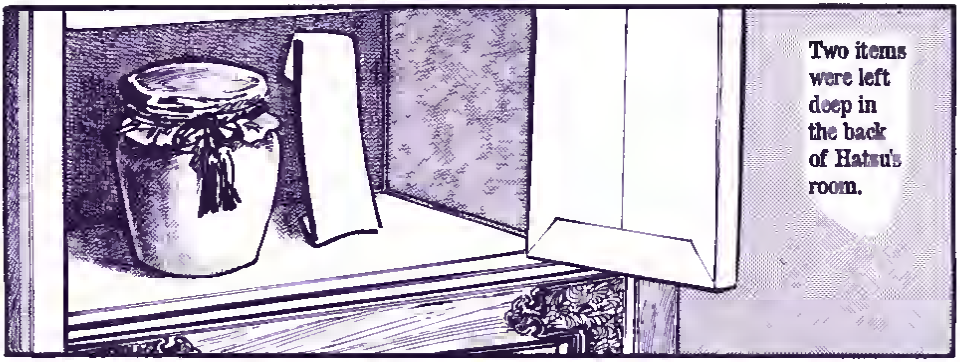

She was so happy
she could die...
all of it was for her...
all of it was for a
single woman
named Hatsu...

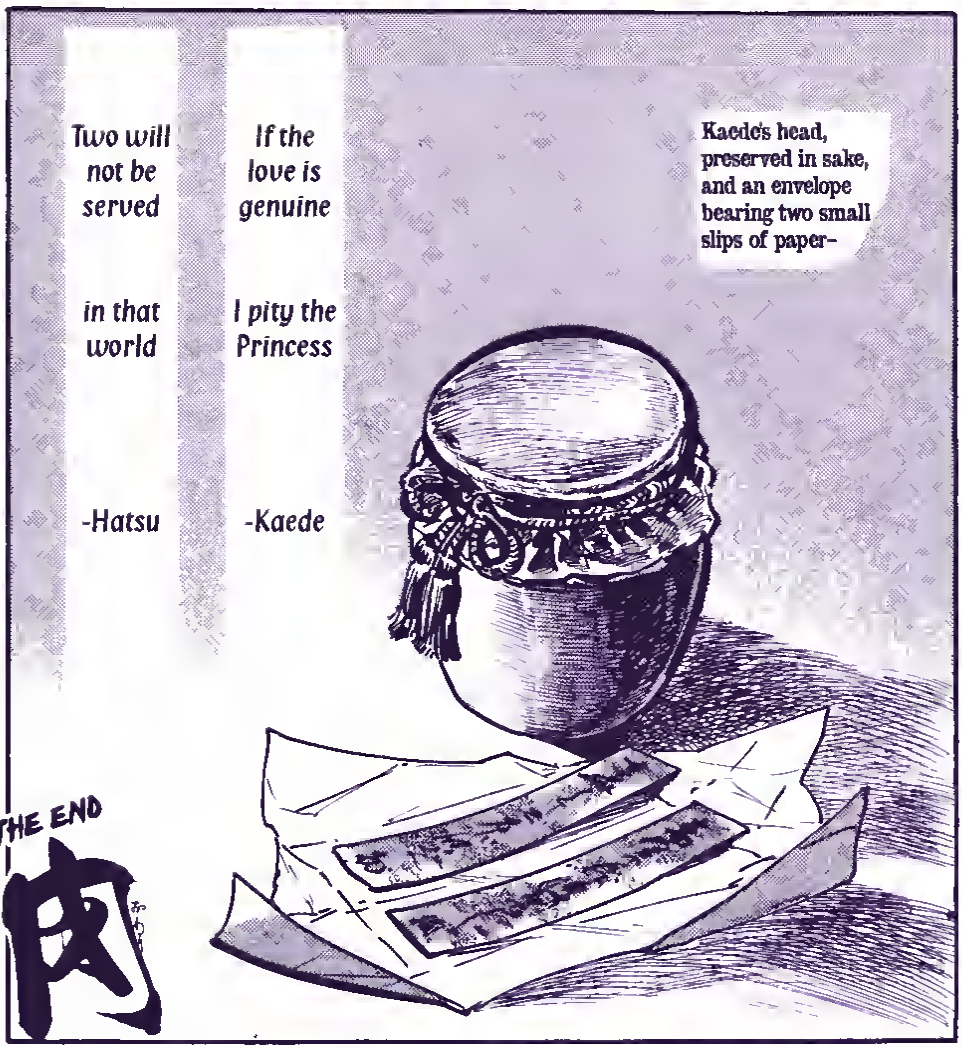
They will see your problem
as absurd... but I will push them...
and get you healed at all costs...
even if we both have to bury
ourselves in Holland...
You will
be healed.

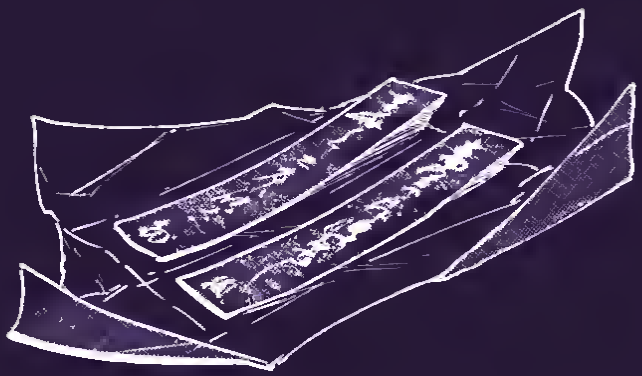
What is
the meaning
of this?
clamor
clamor
On the day of
departure, he passed
out all the remaining
capital in the clan to
less than two hundred
clansmen.


However –
Genzaburou was
assassinated only
minutes before he
boarded the ship!


After the deed, he shook off his pursuers and disappeared.
The murderer was the man who previously had his arm cut off by Genzaburou: Ogata Keijirou...
killed herself next to her husband.
His wife, Hatsu...

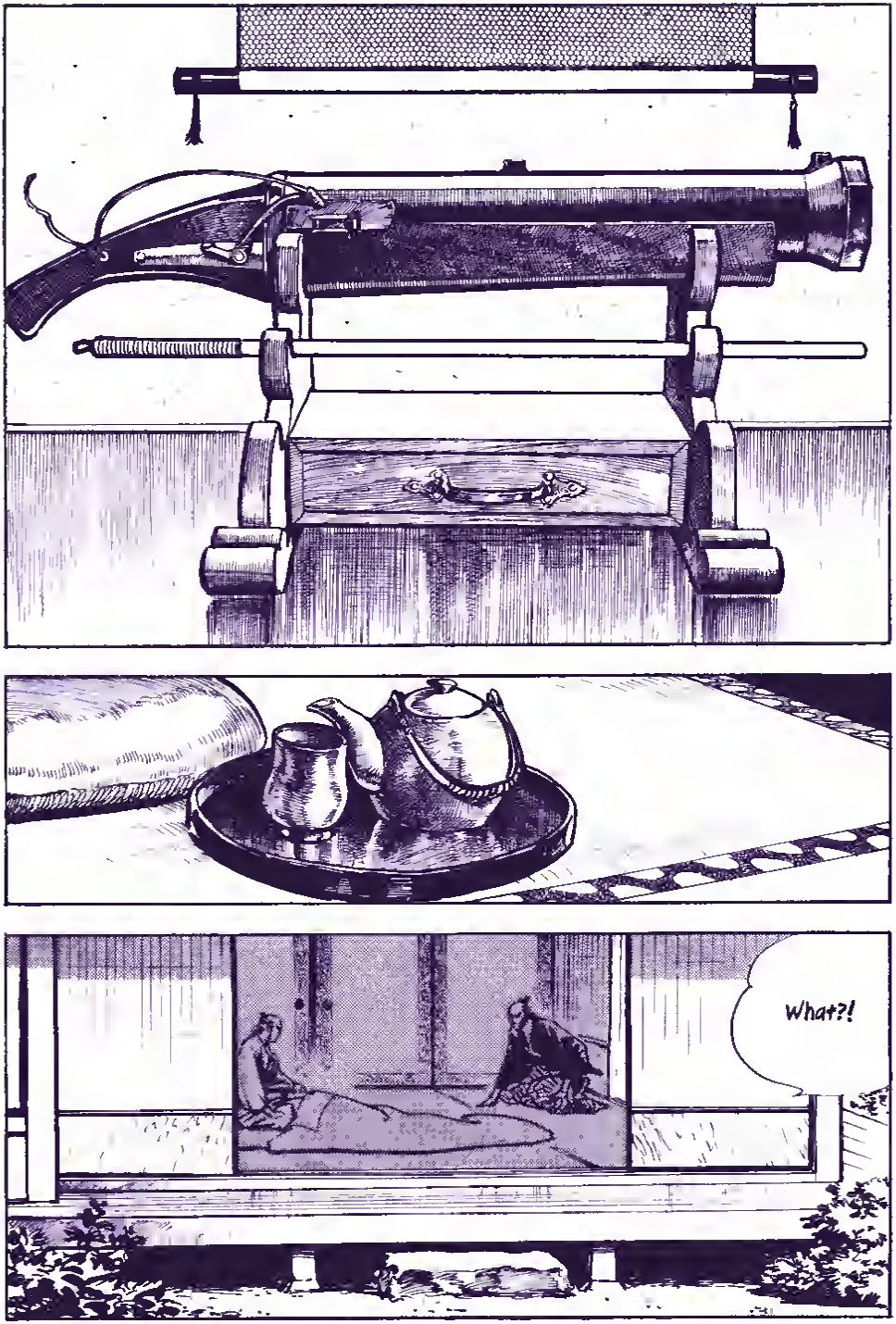

Two items were left deep in the back of Hatsu's room.

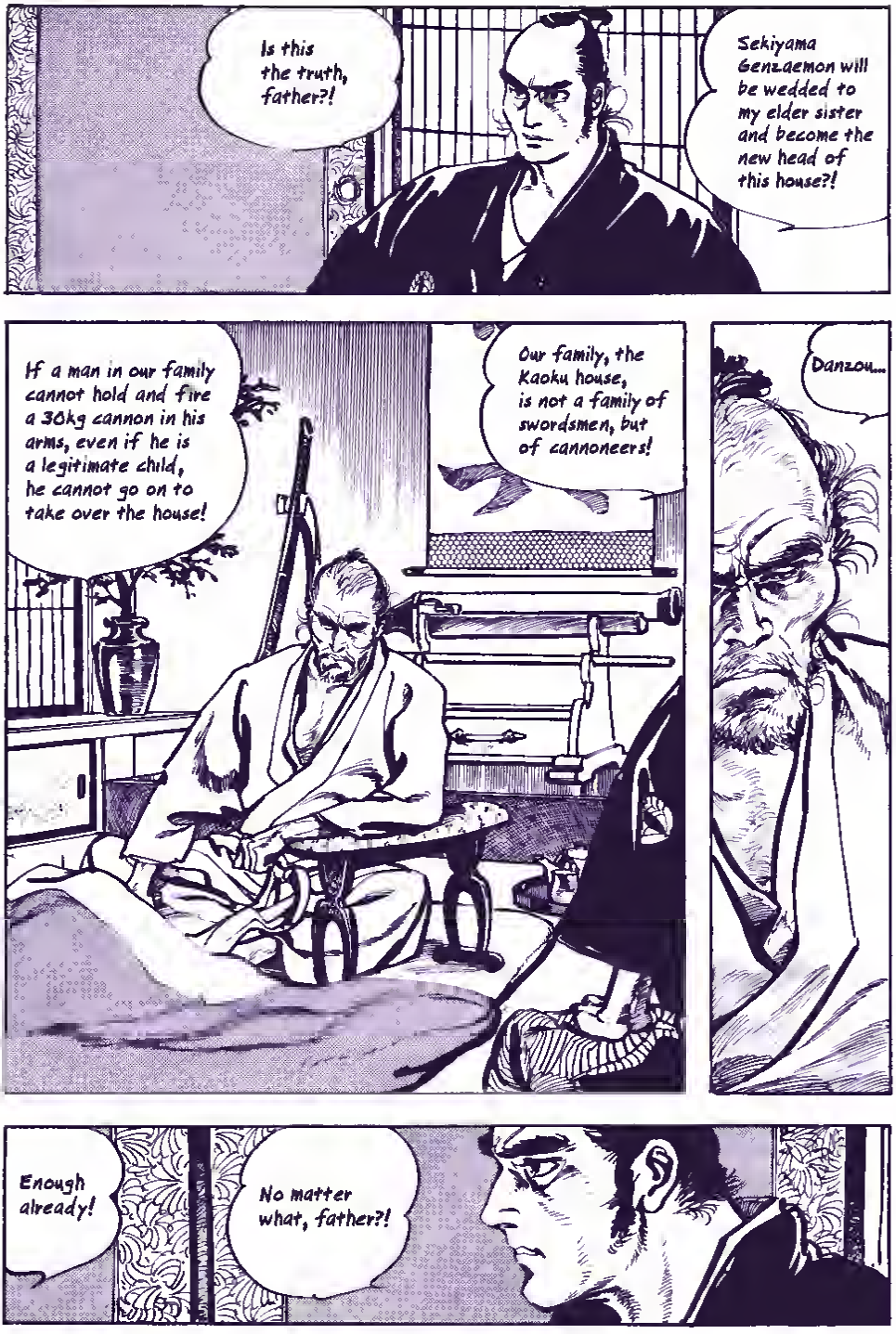

Two will not be served
in that world
-Hatsu
If the love is genuine
I pity the Princess
-Kaede
Kaede's head, preserved in sake, and an envelope bearing two small slips of paper-
THE END

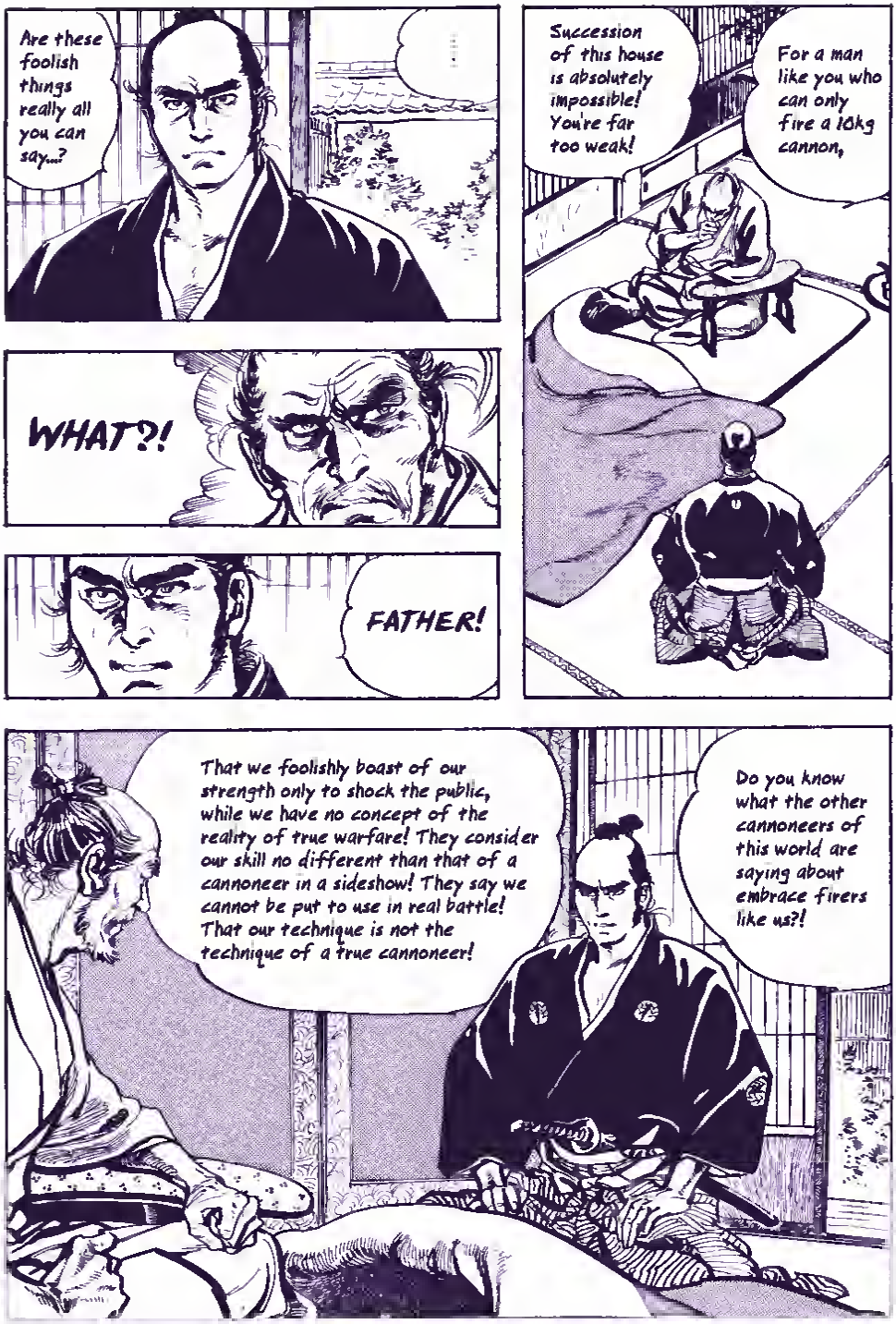


WITH A LARGE CANNON IN MY ARMS

私の抱え大筒

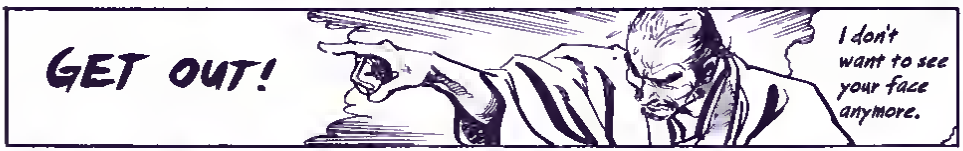

What?!

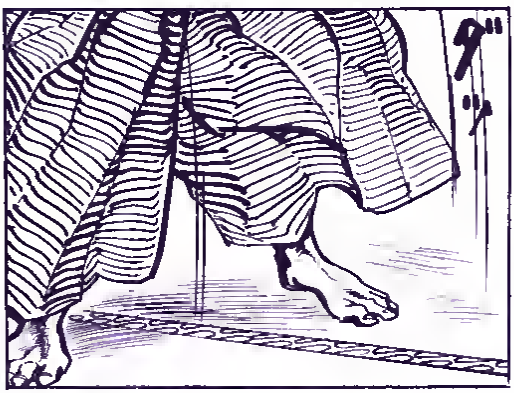

Is this the truth, father?!
Sekiyama Genzaemon will be wedded to my elder sister and become the new head of this house?!
If a man in our family cannot hold and fire a 30kg cannon in his arms, even if he is a legitimate child, he cannot go on to take over the house!
Our family, the Kaoku house, is not a family of swordsmen, but of cannoneers!
Danzou...
Enough already!
No matter what, father?!


Are these foolish things really all you can say...?
Succession of this house is absolutely impossible! You're far too weak!
For a man like you who can only fire a 10kg cannon,
WHAT?!
FATHER!
That we foolishly boast of our strength only to shock the public, while we have no concept of the reality of true warfare! They consider our skill no different than that of a cannoneer in a sideshow! They say we cannot be put to use in real battle! That our technique is not the technique of a true cannoneer!
Do you know what the other cannoneers of this world are saying about embrace firers like us?!

YOU WRETCH!

Are the voices of the world more important than that of the one who brought you into this life?!
You shame your father!


GET OUT!
I don't want to see your face anymore.



Y-YES, HERE IT IS, SIR!
YAHEI, BRING ME MY CANNON!
NUU!
HNNN!

MUUU!
THIS IS NOTHING!
HNNNNN~
ふぬぐっ

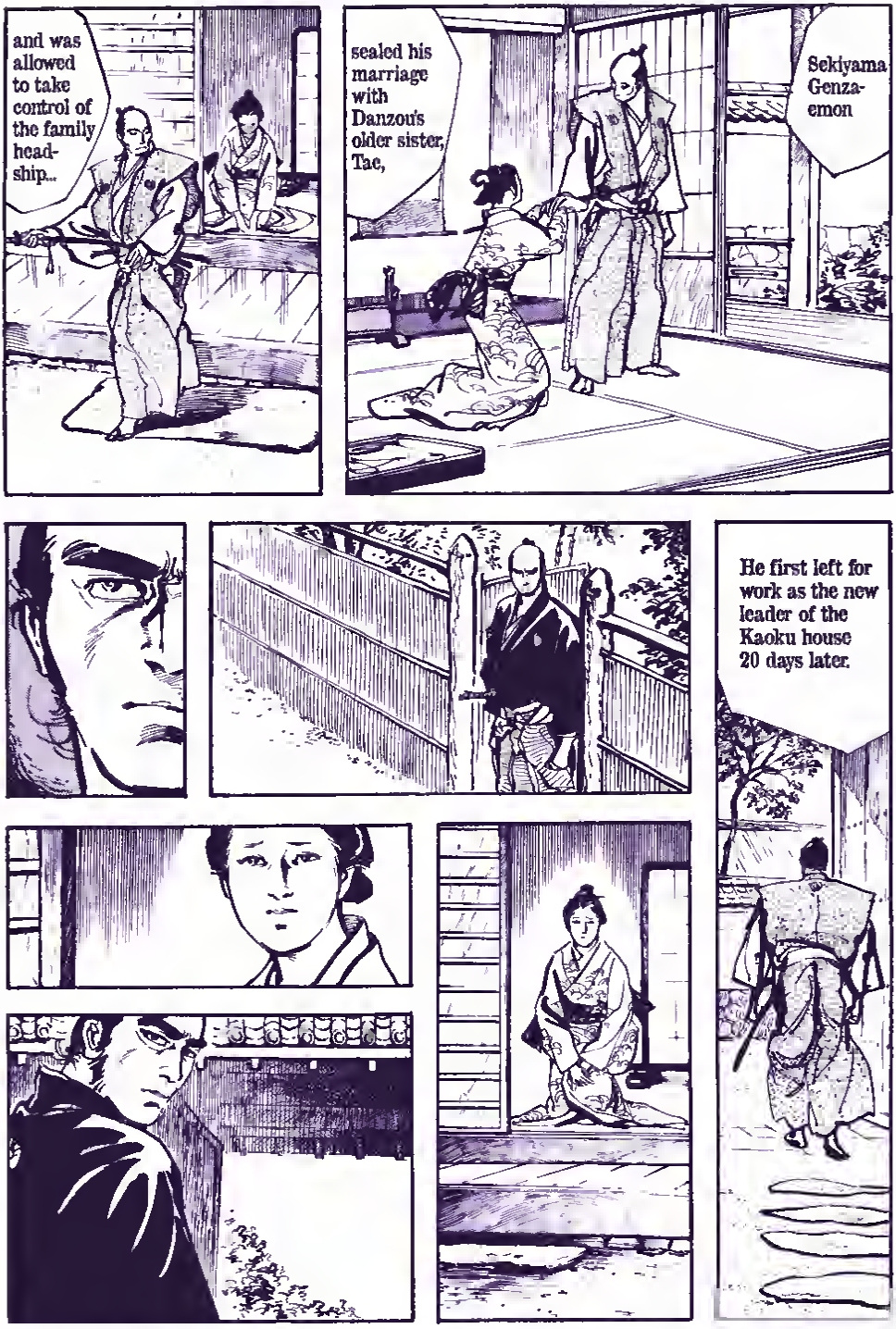
So,
you're saying unless you can shoot a 30kg cannon... hmmm...
then you should accomplish this task. Just like you fervently studied swordsmanship here at my dojo, you should switch over to practicing how to fire that 30kg cannon. Why don't you?
But, if that is the destiny of a man born into a family of cannoneers...
It's a large cannon that is usually meant to be propped up on a rock and shot - that allows the full force of the weapon to be released.
I would like you to think about just what a 30kg cannon means.
Sensei,
That's when the art of embracing this cannon and firing it was born. In time, it soon became a proud test of strength for the strongest men in country villages.
The inner diameter was no different from other small cannons, but after the war ended and the Kanei Period began, new technology in gunmaking allowed extra size to be added to the outside of the cannon.

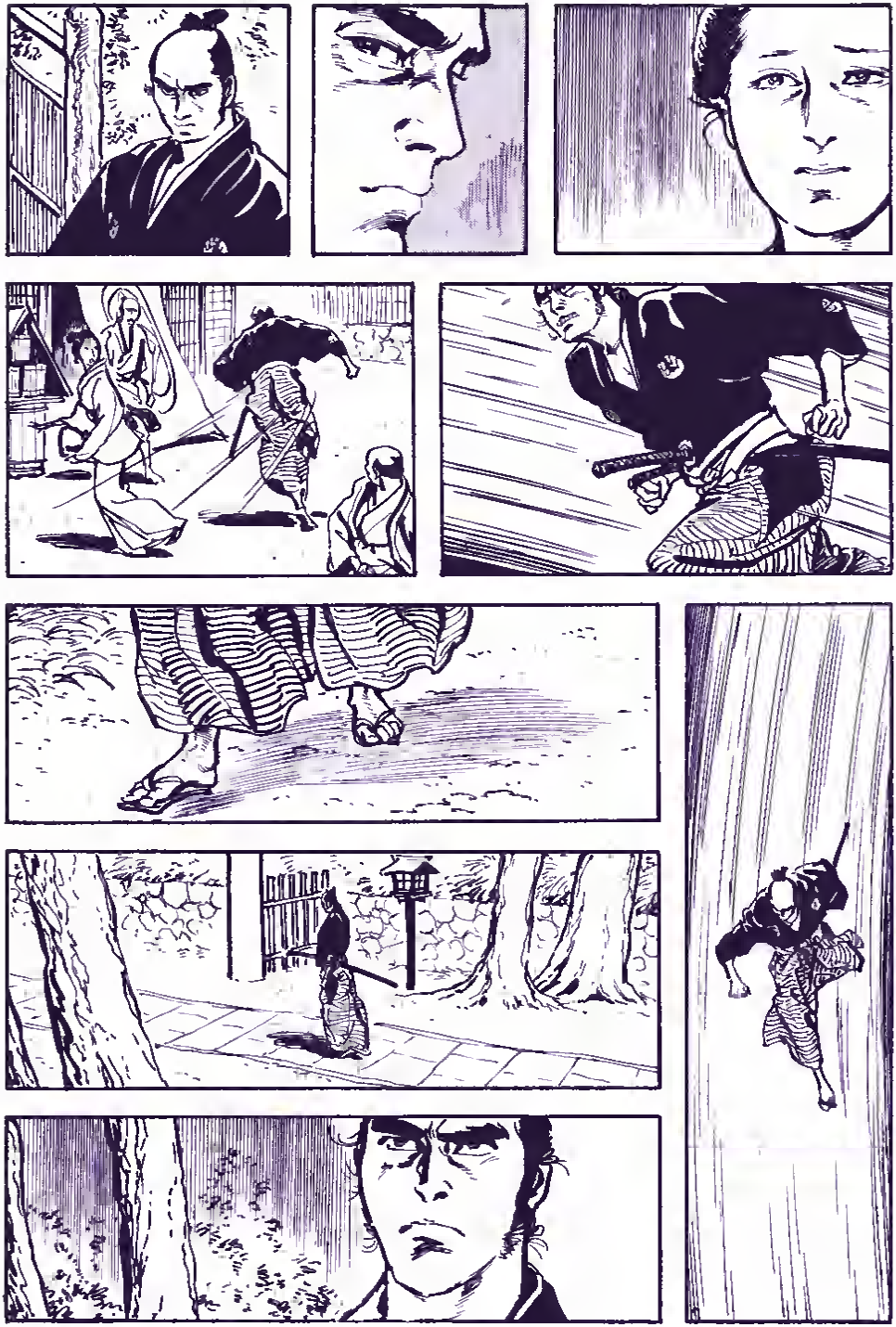
but if a cannon is made any heavier it becomes impossible for one to fire unless they are an advanced cannoneer. Still worse, even if one does possess great technique, unless they are a man of beastly strength, firing a 30kg cannon is completely out of the question.
10kg cannons that fire 10kg balls (27mΣ) are light enough that even normal men could carry and fire them, so they are acknowledged for their convenience,
大筒
This cannon is quite inferior to others when it comes to accessibility and speed, and so it gradually became something used solely for entertainment purposes.
No surprise there...
The recoil and shock from firing such a heavy object will throw most men to the ground. It is no easy task...
Sensei, must I truly master the art of firing a 30kg cannon like my father has ordered?
To be honest, I do not understand your father's intents.
and yet my father insists on a cannon even larger than that, at 30 kg! I simply cannot understand his logic.
A large cannon of 25kg, if used in battle, has no more destructive power than 10 modern rifles,

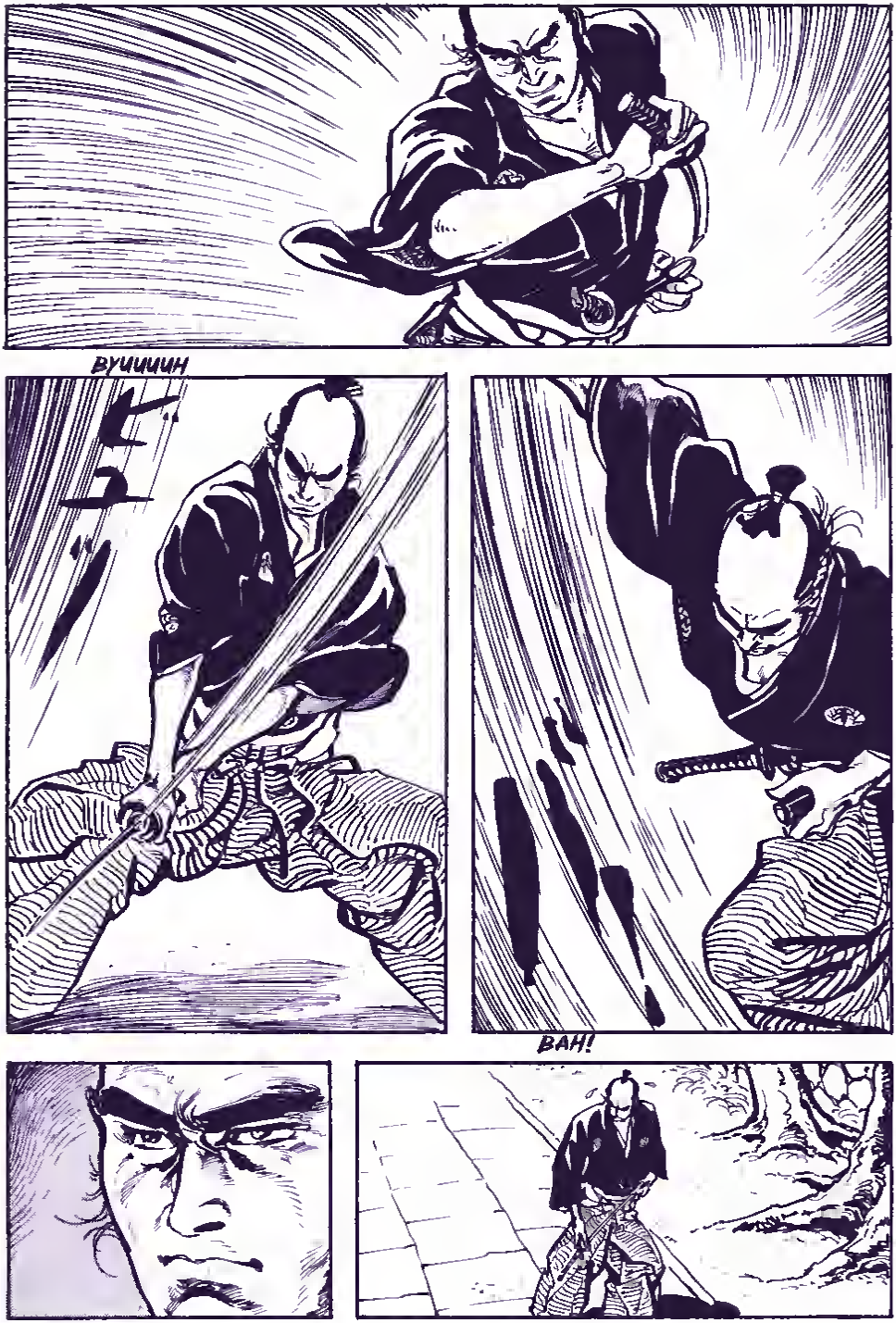
However... your father is no average man. He is a teacher of cannoneering.
I knew it! I don't understand them at all either!
Yes...
Huh?
He must have some reason for this, and you should fulfill his wishes, no matter what.
In any case... if father truly has some hidden motives for doing this... I cannot dedicate myself to such a task without knowing them...

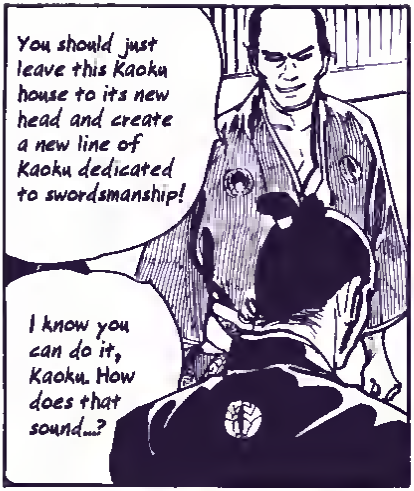
TAP
加
KAOKU
奥
!
.....
Danzou?
Say hello to Sekiyama Genzaemon, soon to be your brother-in-law.

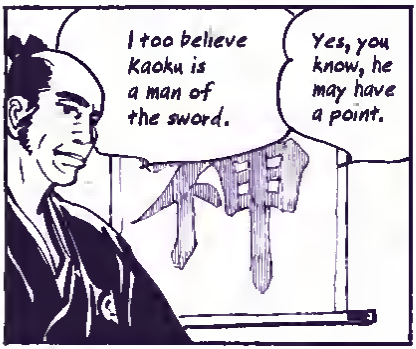
I have heard heard many great things about you from your father...
That settles things, then. We'll do it on the third!
Yes, sir... as long as nothing gets in my way...
We should have the ceremony as soon as possible. I've already taken off work for half a year, and cannot continue doing so. How does next month sound, Genzaemon?
I beg permission to be dismissed...
Don't worry about it.
It's the fate of this house.

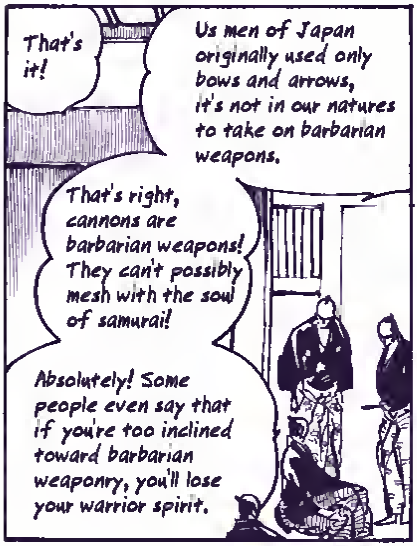

and was allowed to take control of the family head-ship...
sealed his marriage with Danzou's older sister, Tae,
Sekiyama Genza-emon
He first left for work as the new leader of the Kaoku house 20 days later.




ВУИИИИН
ВАН!


You should just leave this Kaoku house to its new head and create a new line of Kaoku dedicated to swordsmanship!
I know you can do it, Kaoku. How does that sound...?


I too believe Kaoku is a man of the sword.
Yes, you know, he may have a point.

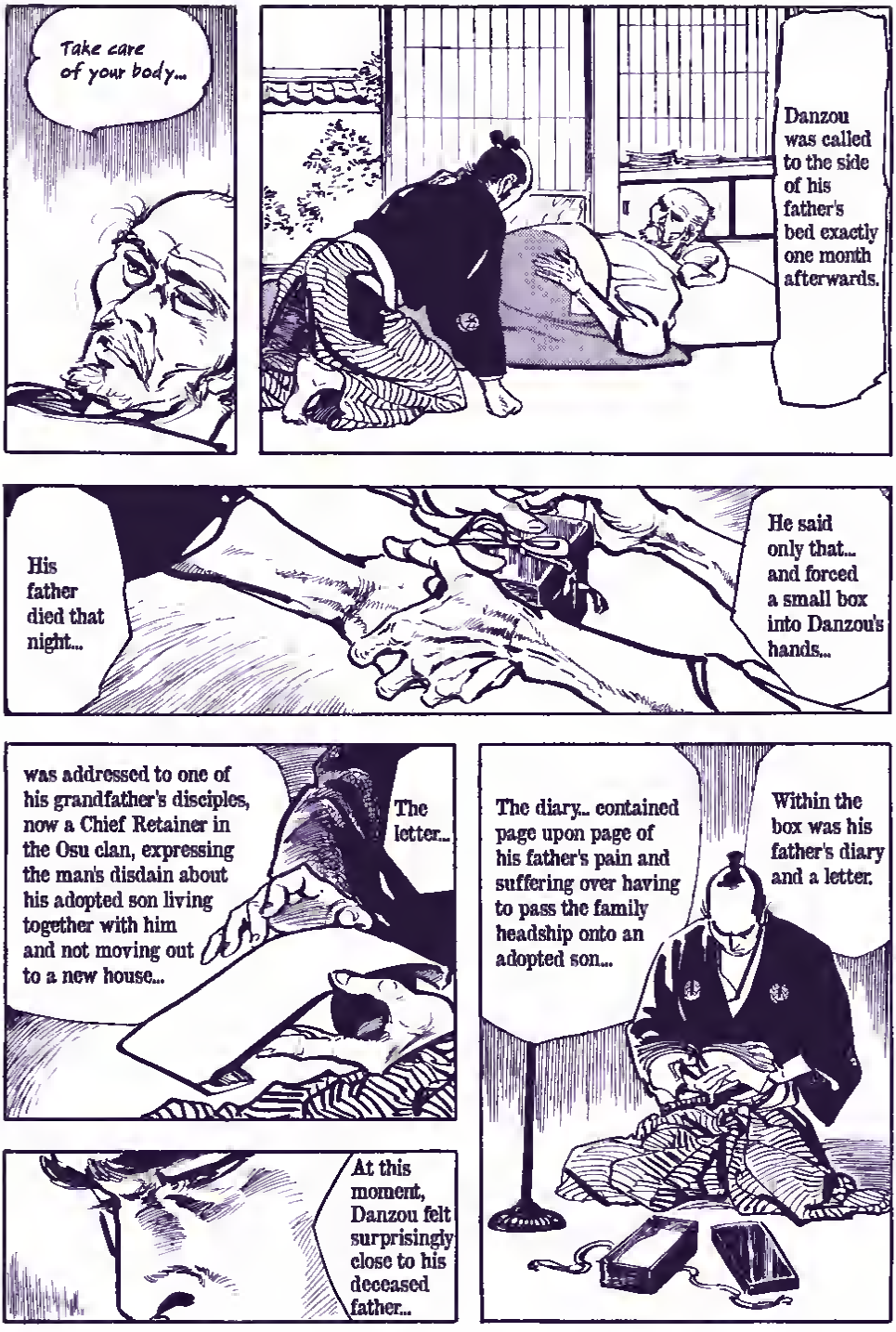

That's it!
Us men of Japan originally used only bows and arrows, it's not in our natures to take on barbarian weapons.
That's right, cannons are barbarian weapons! They can't possibly mesh with the soul of samurai!
Absolutely! Some people even say that if you're too inclined toward barbarian weaponry, you'll lose your warrior spirit.

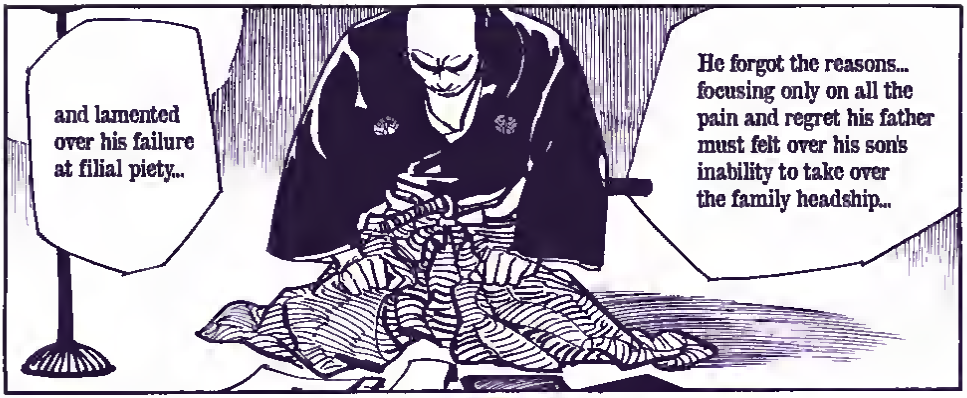
It looks like you'll be confined to living under a brother-in-law for the rest of your life now.
Just sounds to me like your father's sickness has driven him a little mad.
I just can't wrap my mind around that 30kg...
What are you going to do, Kaoku...?
I don't think you need to think over this anymore - the answer seems pretty clear to me.
You never personally liked cannons, did you, Kaoku? Not to mention you're always going on about how large cannons are useless.
Now, your father, knowing that there was no way someone with doubts toward cannoneering like you would be willing to fire such a heavy object, went around you and got a different successor. If you look at it that way, he relieved you of the responsibility. Do you see what I'm saying, Kaoku...?

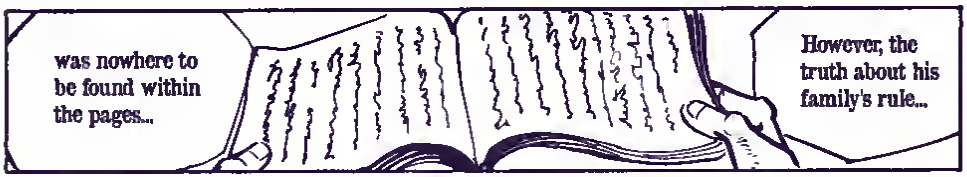
But truthfully, pistols are the tools of cowards. They aren't weapons meant to be filled with blood, sweat, and effort like swords are.
That's right. We can't overlook the strength of pistols, after all.
But the real problem here is unbalance...
I'm going home.
I don't think so...
Did we say something wrong?

Sir Genza-emon...
In contrast to the intense amount of work and training it takes to be able to fire a 25kg cannon, due to its weight, it has been deemed impractical for use in battle.
I would like to hear your honest opinion on large cannons...
I... trained hard without ever thinking deeply about this subject.
However, the situation I am in now forces me to prioritize practicality over all else.
That is my opinion...
I would like to hear your honest opinions on this, brother...
In spite of this, I have no idea as to the practicality of the extra large 30kg cannon of which my father insists on mastery.

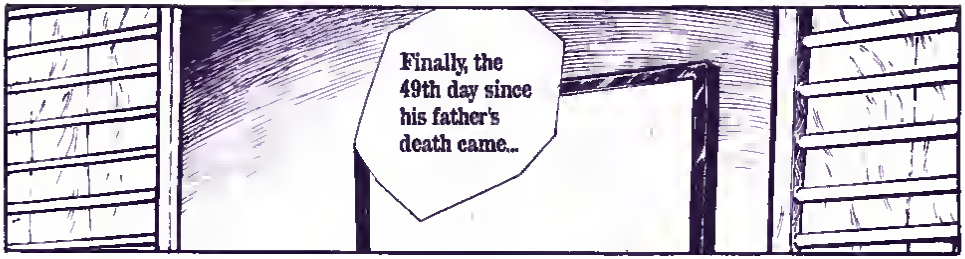
Yes...
The situation you are in now...?
My father's heart, nor your heart...
I don't understand...
Embraced firing... if you can master it with the 30kg cannon, I will gladly pass the headship to you...
?
Sir Danzou...
.....
What?!

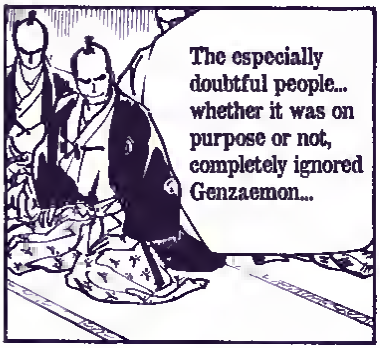

Take care of your body...
Danzou was called to the side of his father's bed exactly one month afterwards.
His father died that night...
He said only that... and forced a small box into Danzou's hands...
was addressed to one of his grandfather's disciples, now a Chief Retainer in the Osu clan, expressing the man's disdain about his adopted son living together with him and not moving out to a new house...
The letter...
The diary... contained page upon page of his father's pain and suffering over having to pass the family headship onto an adopted son...
Within the box was his father's diary and a letter.
At this moment, Danzou felt surprisingly close to his deceased father...

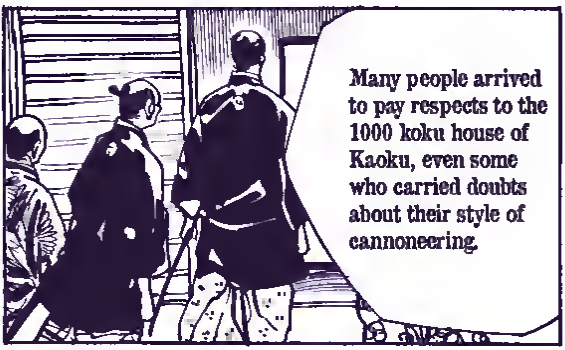

and lamented over his failure at filial piety...
He forgot the reasons... focusing only on all the pain and regret his father must felt over his son's inability to take over the family headship...

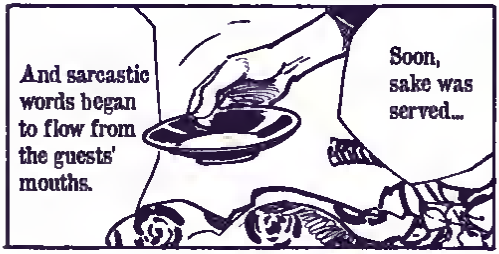

was nowhere to be found within the pages...
However, the truth about his family's rule...

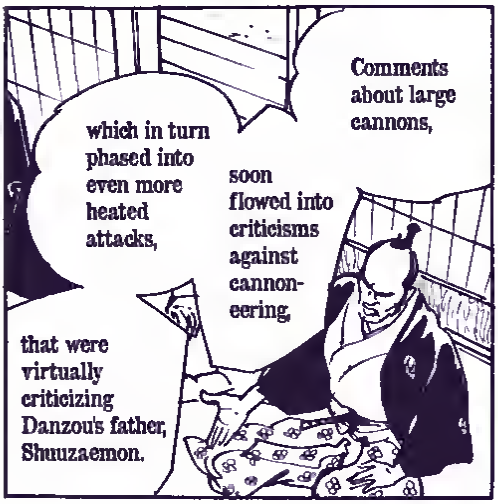
.....
to see the face of... your child...
H can't wait!
I'm so grateful for Sir Danzou's feelings...
I feel like a huge burden has been lifted from me...

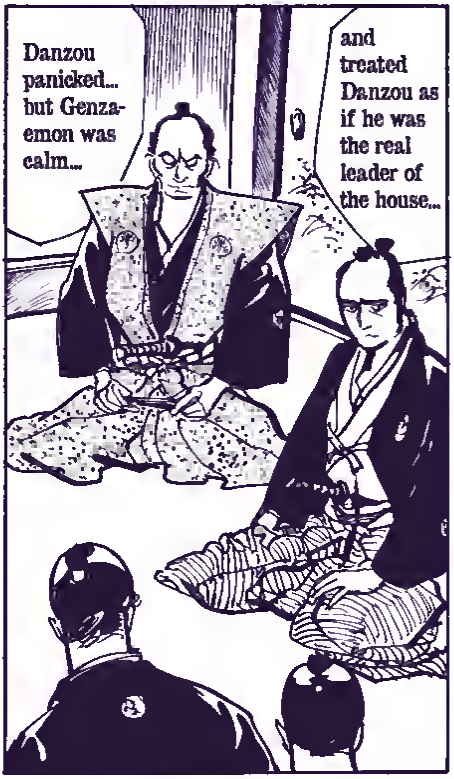

Finally, the 49th day since his father's death came...


The especially doubtful people... whether it was on purpose or not, completely ignored Genzaemon...

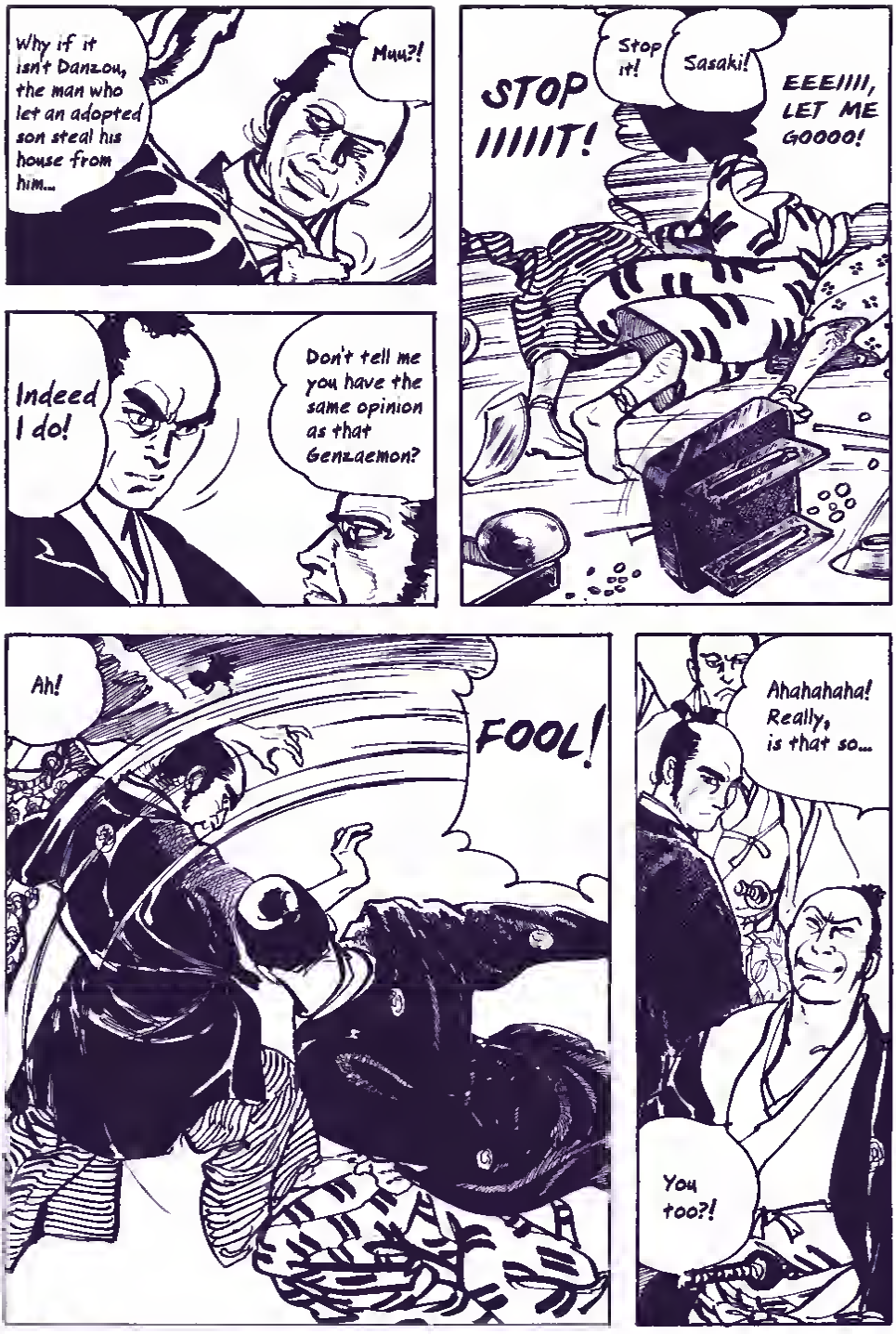

Many people arrived to pay respects to the 1000 koku house of Kaoku, even some who carried doubts about their style of cannoneering.


And sarcastic words began to flow from the guests' mouths.
Soon, sake was served...


Comments about large cannons,
which in turn phased into even more heated attacks,
soon flowed into criticisms against cannon-eering,
that were virtually criticizing Danzou's father, Shuuzaemon.

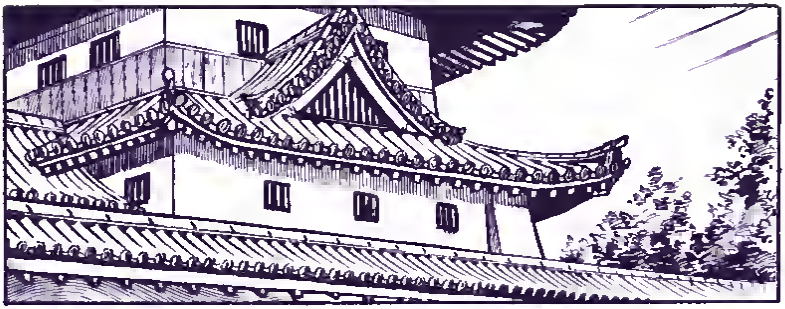

Danzou panicked... but Genza-emon was calm...
and treated Danzou as if he was the real leader of the house...

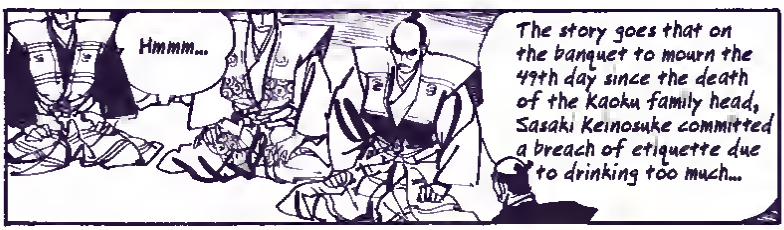
Before Danzou could grow angry, however, Genzaemon lost his patience and flew into a rage at this very moment.
Hoh... how amusing!
Would you cut it out, Keino-suke?!
S-stop it, Sasaki!
People who despise cannoneering aren't real warriors, huh?
S-stop!
A true warrior would never look down on cannoneering!
Have you gotten so drunk that you've forgotten your courtesy?! I will not tolerate any more of this abusive language!

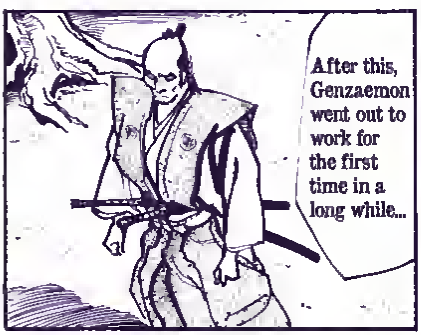

Why if it isn't Danzou, the man who let an adopted son steal his house from him...
Muu?!
STOP IIIIIT!
Stop it!
Sasaki!
EEEIIII, LET ME GOOOO!
Indeed I do!
Don't tell me you have the same opinion as that Genzaemon?
Ah!
FOOL!
Ahahahaha! Really, is that so...
You too?!

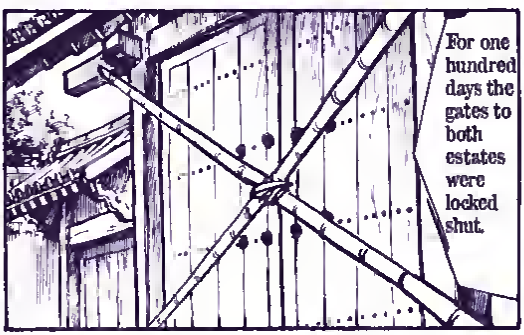
AH! DANZOU, YOU...!
DEPENDING ON YOUR ANSWER, WE'LL SHOW NO MERCY!
IF CANNONEERING IS THE REAL WAY OF THE WARRIOR, THEN WHY DID YOU CUT HIM WITH A SWORD?!
WAIT A MOMENT!
W-WAIIIIT!

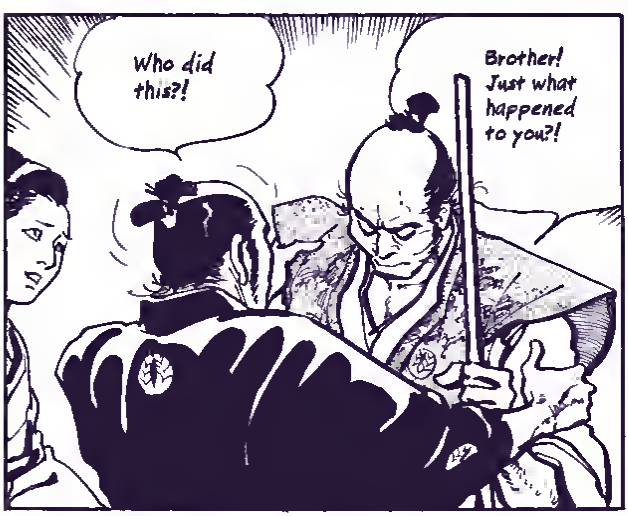
It was decided that both the Sasaki and Kaoku households would receive a punishment of confinement for one hundred days.

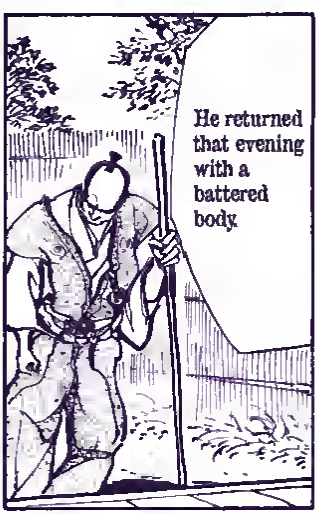



Hmmm...
The story goes that on the banquet to mourn the 49th day since the death of the Kaoku family head, Sasaki Keinosuke committed a breach of etiquette due to drinking too much...

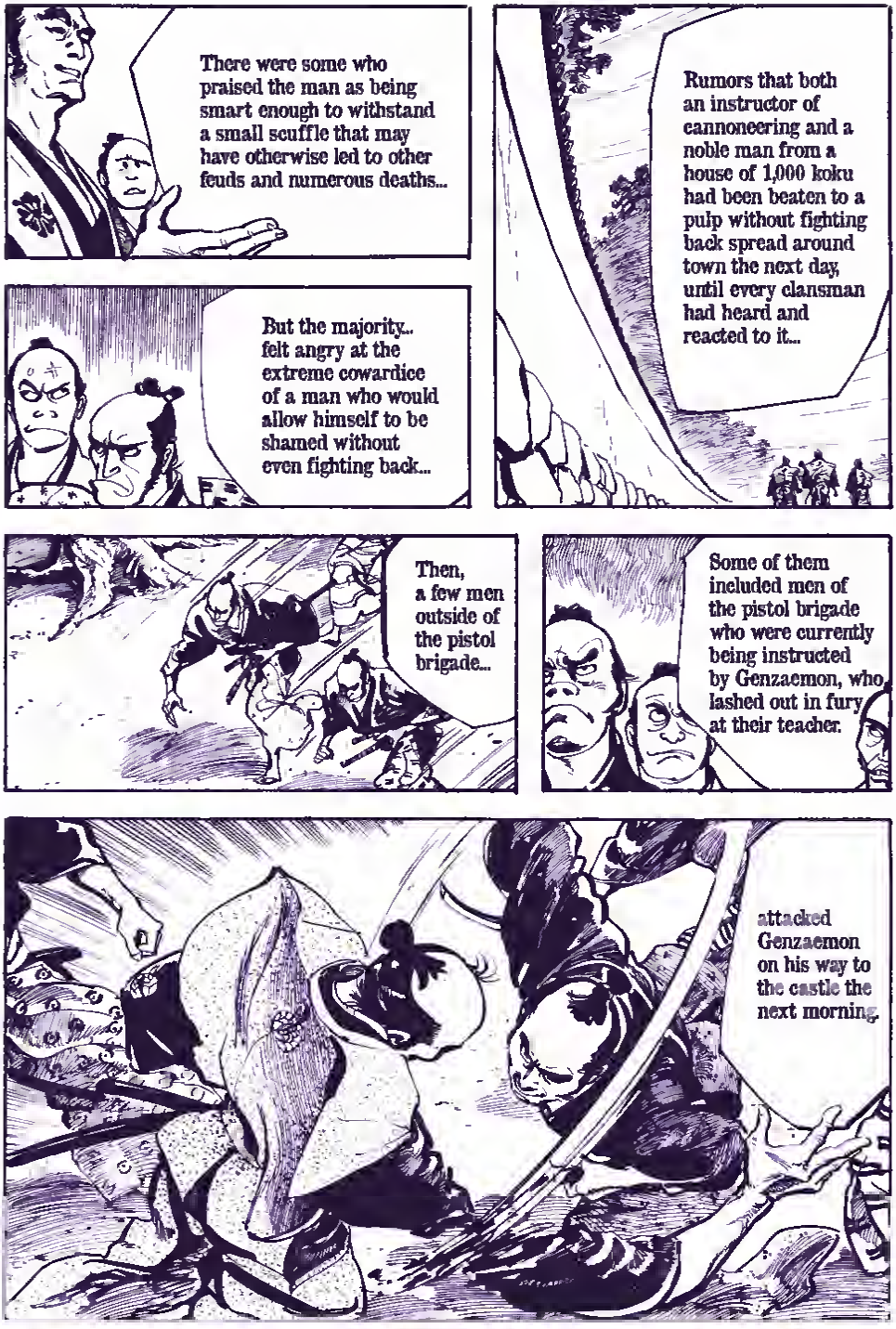








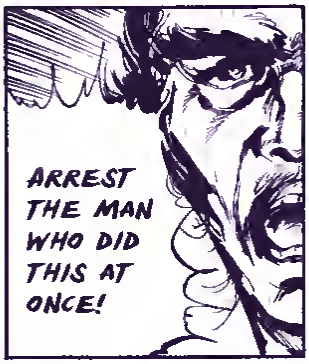
We Armored Mounts are comprised solely of men who have been brought up studying the way of the sword and spear...
After finishing my work at the castle, when I was coming home, a few men from the mounted division surrounded me, saying they wanted to talk...
It went like this...
But according to you, sir, we who do not practice cannoneering are not true warriors. Therefore we'd like you to give us a demonstration of what a true warrior really is... over in that open field.
STOP THIS FOOLISHNESS! YOU'VE MISUNDER-STOOD!
Wait just a moment! It looks like my words have been distorted... I never said any such thing!
there is no way I can use a blade to clear up a mere misunder-stand-ing...
No...
And you didn't fight back, brother?!
But they refused to listen... and lynched me...
But...!
Ununu!


There were some who praised the man as being smart enough to withstand a small scuffle that may have otherwise led to other feuds and numerous deaths...
But the majority... felt angry at the extreme cowardice of a man who would allow himself to be shamed without even fighting back...
Rumors that both an instructor of cannoneering and a noble man from a house of 1,000 koku had been beaten to a pulp without fighting back spread around town the next day, until every clansman had heard and reacted to it...
Then, a few men outside of the pistol brigade...
Some of them included men of the pistol brigade who were currently being instructed by Genzaemon, who lashed out in fury at their teacher.
attacked Genzaemon on his way to the castle the next morning.

Indeed... he managed to escape with his life only because I stepped in at the last second and stopped things.

Nuuu...
ぬうう

Sir!

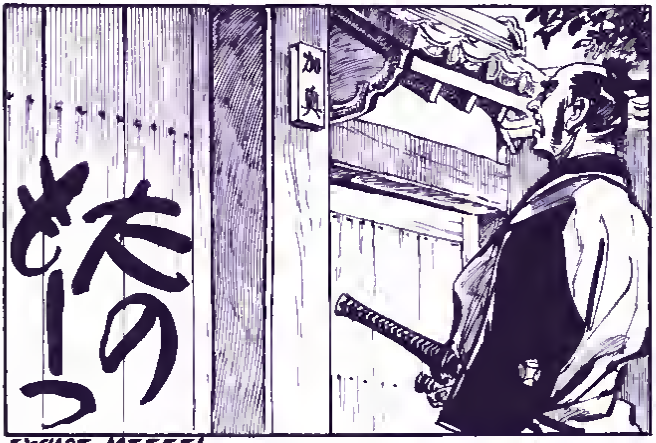

ARREST THE MAN WHO DID THIS AT ONCE!

Kaoku Genzaemon?! Had his right arm cut off?!
WHAT?!

The eight men responsible for the deed... under the discretion of the castle Elder Naitou Kanando, were arrested and punished severely on the same day, an act which shocked the public...

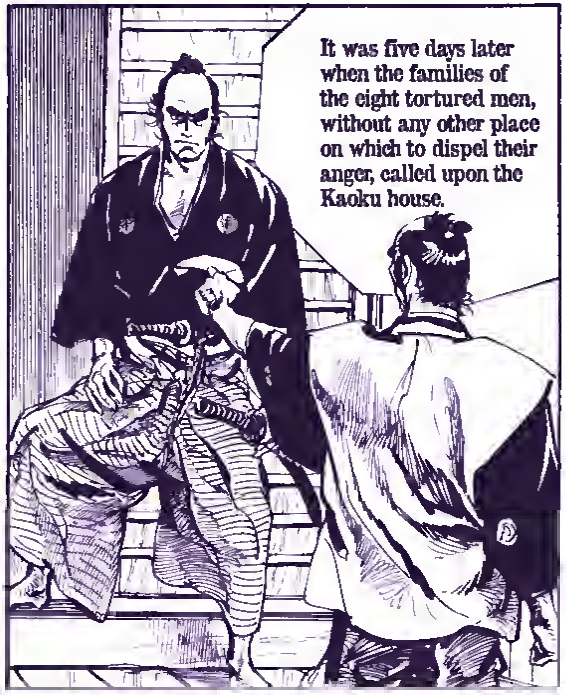
but Naitou Kanando did not budge an inch.

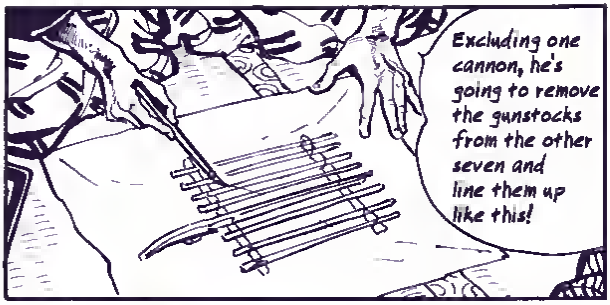
The Chief Retainers heavily interrogated the Elder as to the reasons for such extremity.

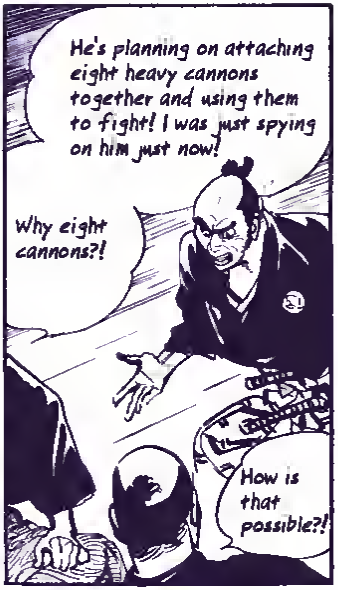


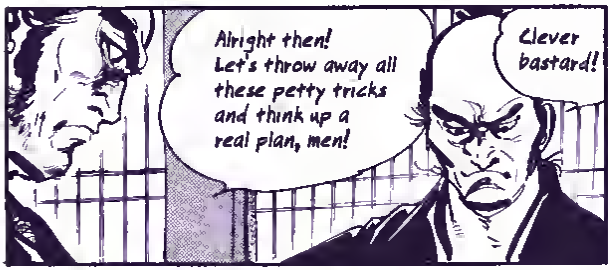
EXCUSE MEEEE!

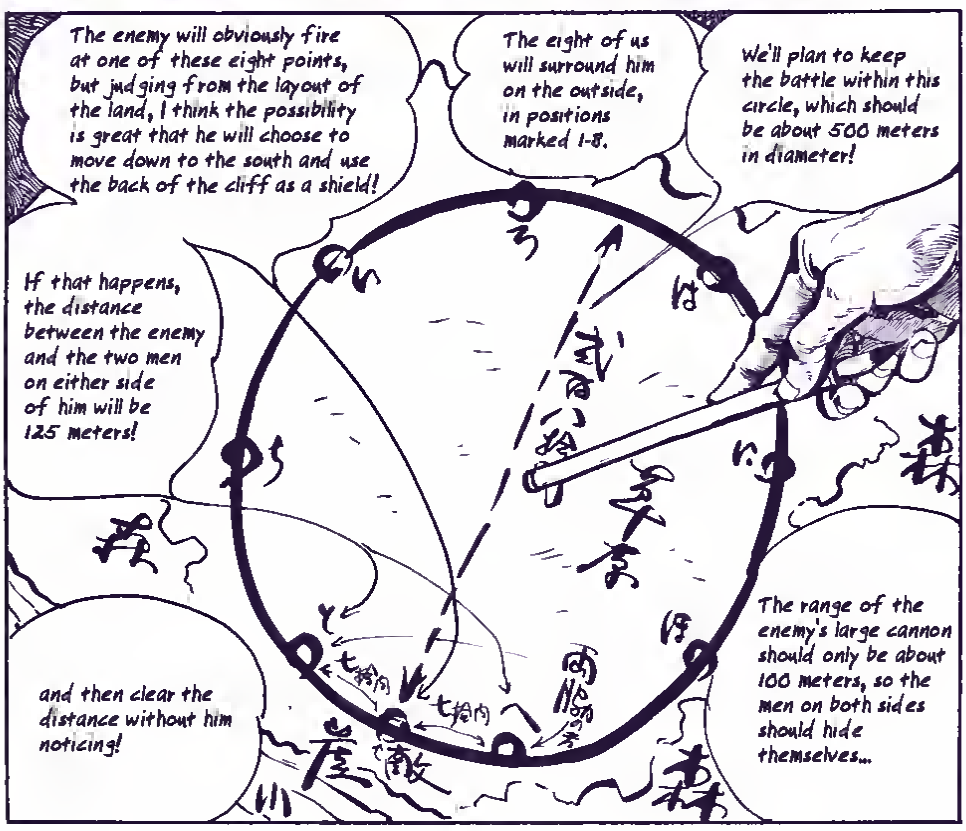
A battle between eight swordsman and one cannoneer was scheduled to take place three days later, and the eight families immediately began planning their strategy.

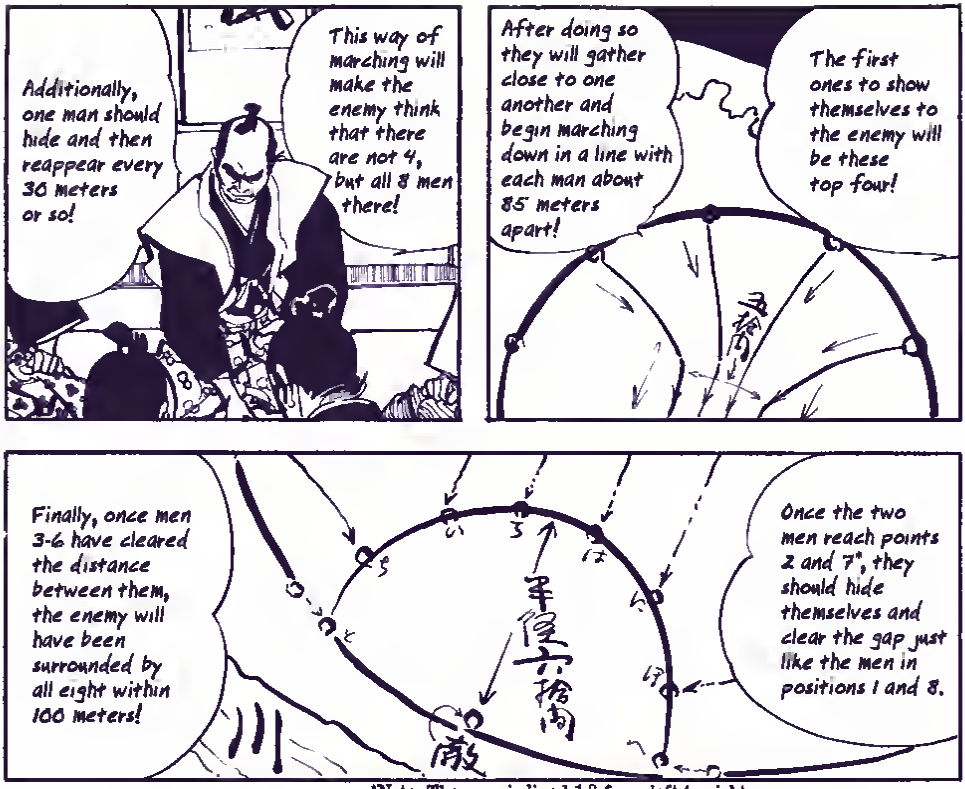

It was five days later when the families of the eight tortured men, without any other place on which to dispel their anger, called upon the Kaoku house.

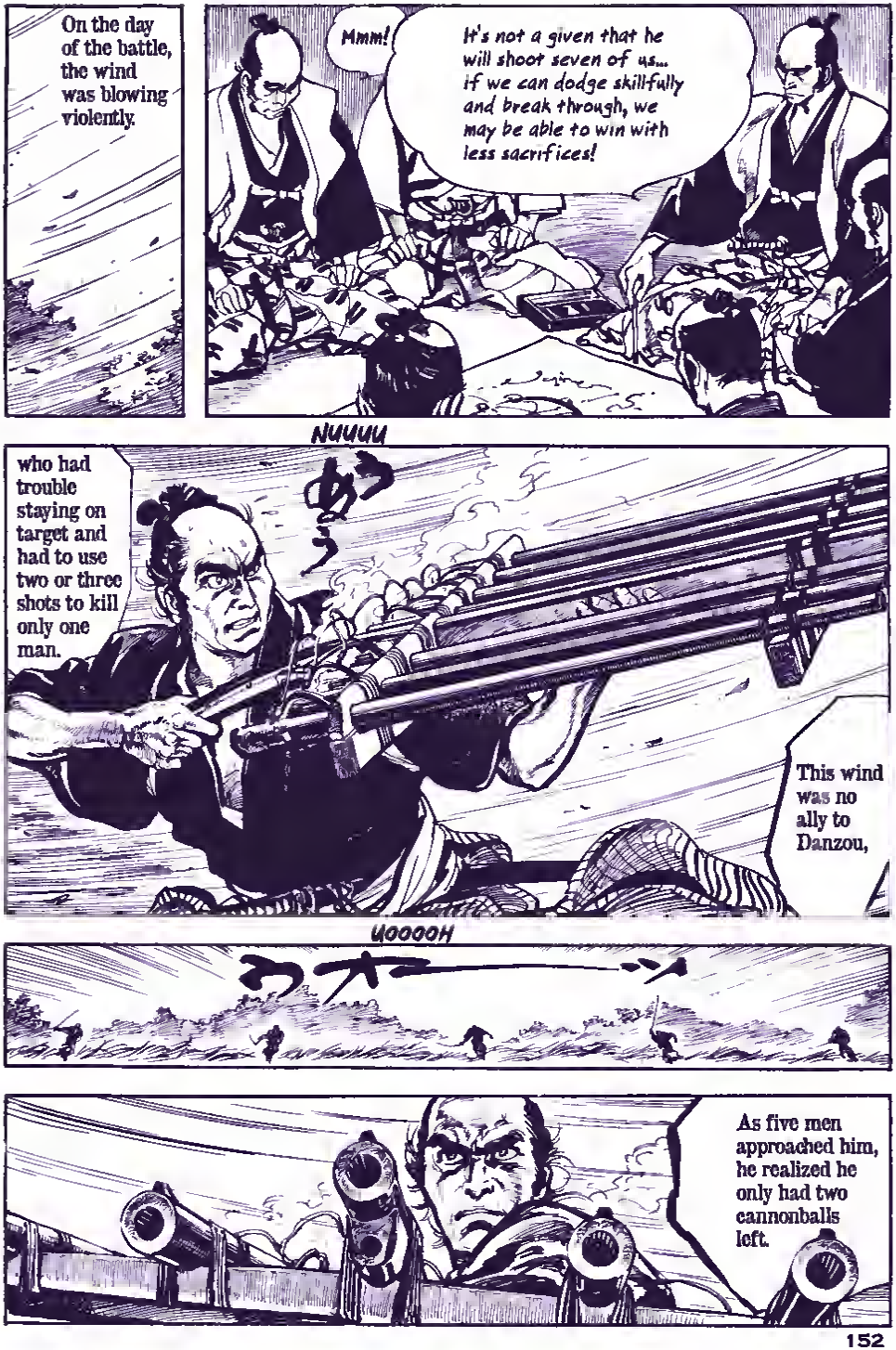

Excluding one cannon, he's going to remove the gunstocks from the other seven and line them up like this!


He's planning on attaching eight heavy cannons together and using them to fight! I was just spying on him just now!
Why eight cannons?!
How is that possible?!


Alright then! Let's throw away all these petty tricks and think up a real plan, men!
Clever bastard!

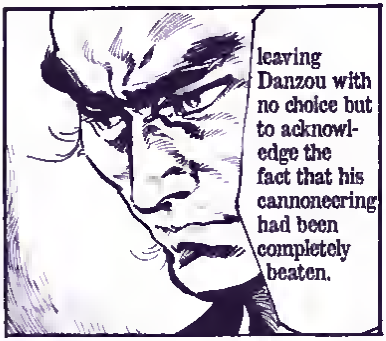

The enemy will obviously fire at one of these eight points, but judging from the layout of the land, I think the possibility is great that he will choose to move down to the south and use the back of the cliff as a shield!
The eight of us will surround him on the outside, in positions marked 1-8.
We'll plan to keep the battle within this circle, which should be about 500 meters in diameter!
If that happens, the distance between the enemy and the two men on either side of him will be 125 meters!
The range of the enemy's large cannon should only be about 100 meters, so the men on both sides should hide themselves...
and then clear the distance without him noticing!

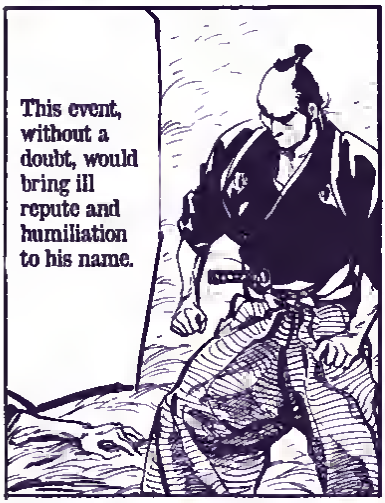

Additionally, one man should hide and then reappear every 30 meters or so!
This way of marching will make the enemy think that there are not 4, but all 8 men there!
After doing so they will gather close to one another and begin marching down in a line with each man about 85 meters apart!
The first ones to show themselves to the enemy will be these top four!
Finally, once men 3-6 have cleared the distance between them, the enemy will have been surrounded by all eight within 100 meters!
Once the two men reach points 2 and 7*, they should hide themselves and clear the gap just like the men in positions 1 and 8.
*Note: The map is lined 1-8 from left to right.
It should take 2 seconds for him to fire at one man, and 16 seconds to fire at all eight!
The enemy will then fire!
That's when we'll all march in together!
Our victory depends on whether we have good or bad luck that day!
Which means that even if seven out of eight men are shot, one should be able to break through and kill him!
It will take us 14 seconds for us to dash toward him and secure victory!


On the day of the battle, the wind was blowing violently.
Mmm!
It's not a given that he will shoot seven of us... if we can dodge skillfully and break through, we may be able to win with less sacrifices!
NUUUU
who had trouble staying on target and had to use two or three shots to kill only one man.
This wind was no ally to Danzou,
UOOOOH
As five men approached him, he realized he only had two cannonballs left.

BAAAH
BAAAH
BAH
KIEEEHHH
He no longer had any time left to reload.
DANZOOOOU! CANNONEERING HAS FAILED YOUUUU!
NUUUUU!

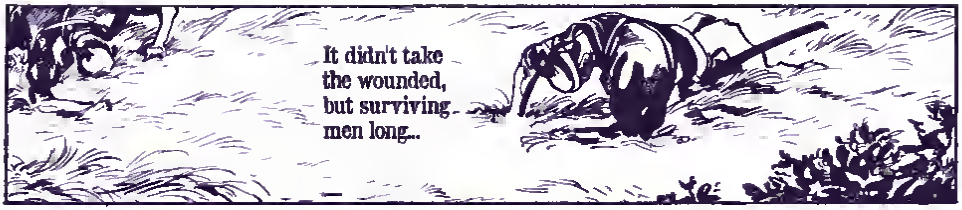
He defeated his enemies...


leaving Danzou with no choice but to acknowledge the fact that his cannoneering had been completely beaten.

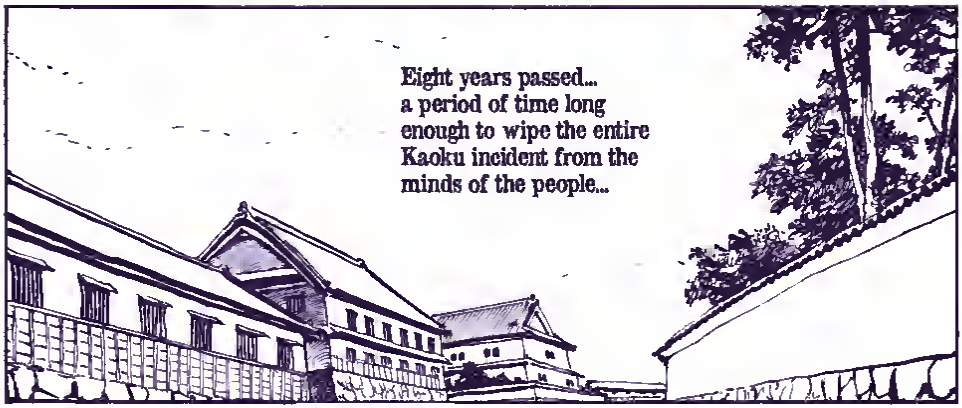

This event, without a doubt, would bring ill repute and humiliation to his name.

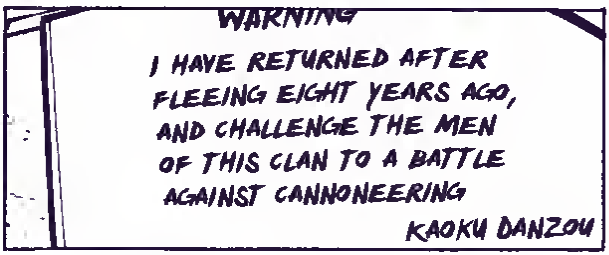
He had no choice but to continue fighting with his short sword.

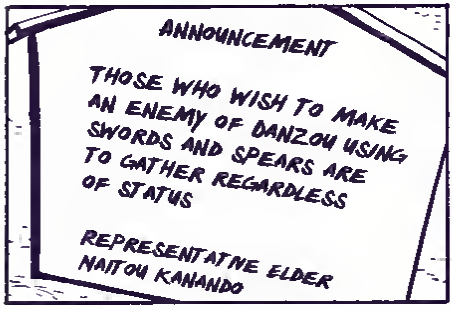
and disappeared from the clan.
Despairing over this, he did not return home

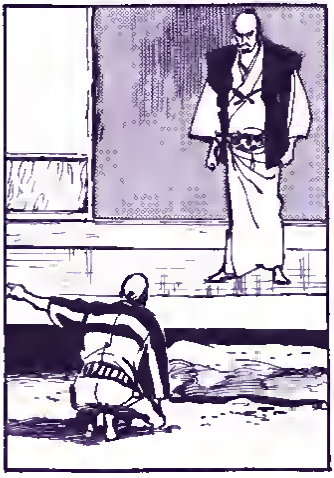

It didn't take the wounded, but surviving men long...

to return to Danzou's house and assassinate his elder sister and brother-in-law..

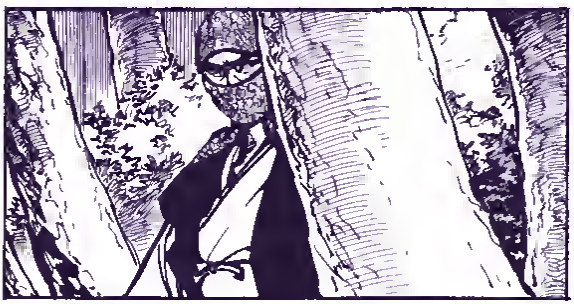

Eight years passed... a period of time long enough to wipe the entire Kaoku incident from the minds of the people...

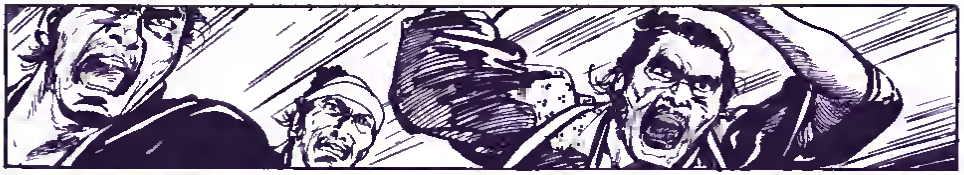

WARNING
I HAVE RETURNED AFTER FLEEING EIGHT YEARS AGO, AND CHALLENGE THE MEN OF THIS CLAN TO A BATTLE AGAINST CANNONEERING
KAOKU DANZOU

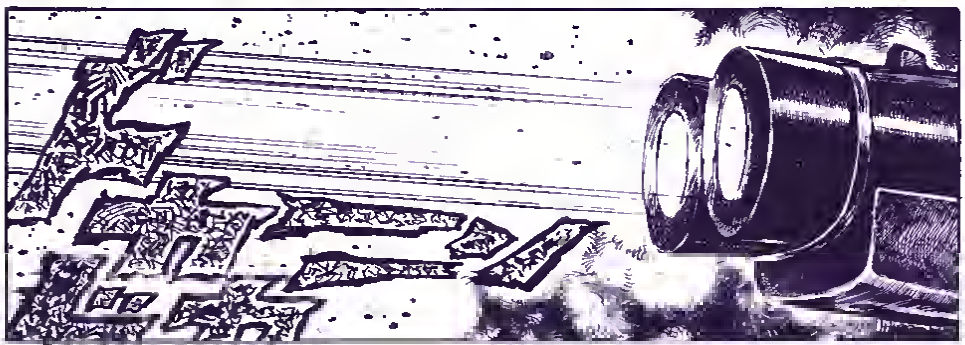

ANNOUNCEMENT
THOSE WHO WISH TO MAKE AN ENEMY OF DANZOU USING SWORDS AND SPEARS ARE TO GATHER REGARDLESS OF STATUS
REPRESENTATNE ELDER NAITOU KANANDO

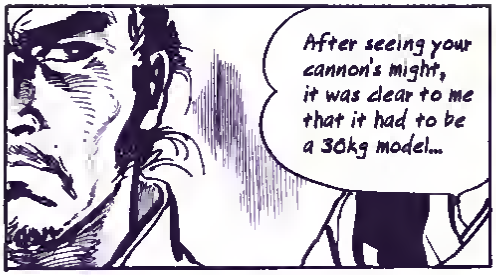


内
NAITOU
藤

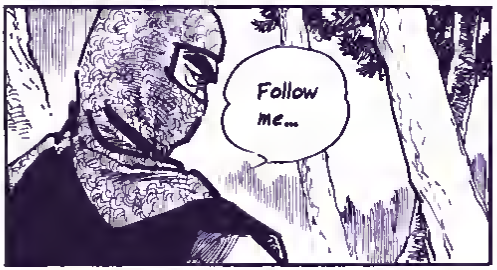


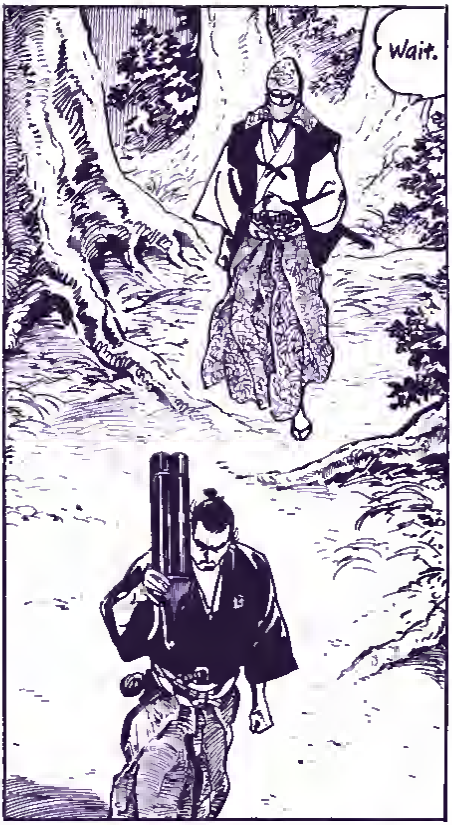


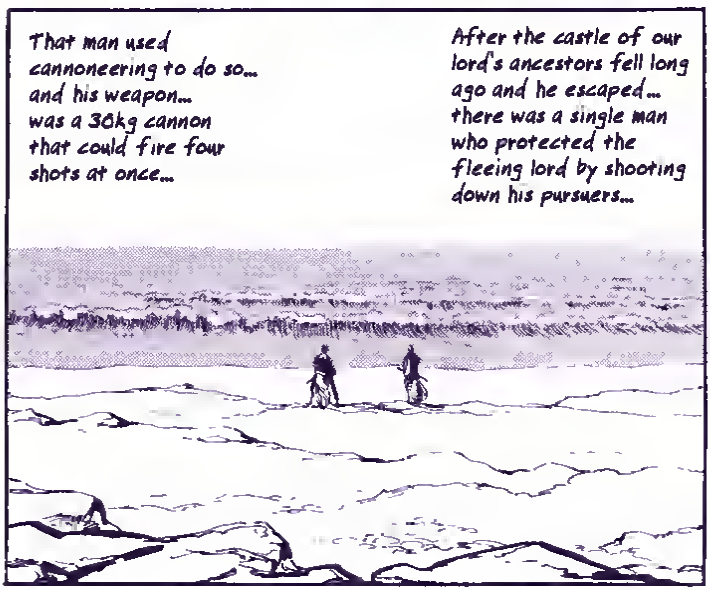

DOGAAAA DOGAAA

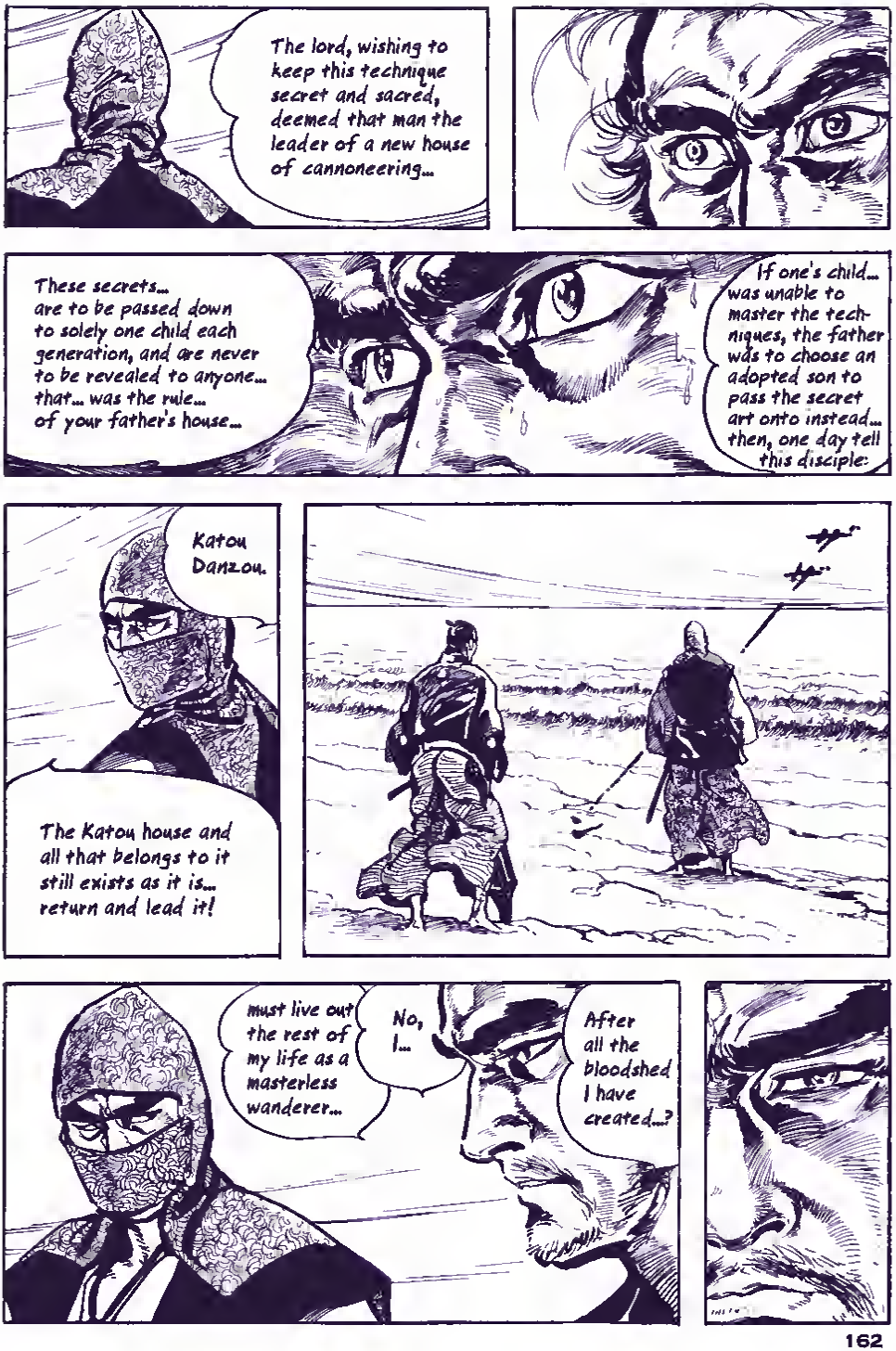

After seeing your cannon's might, it was clear to me that it had to be a 30kg model...

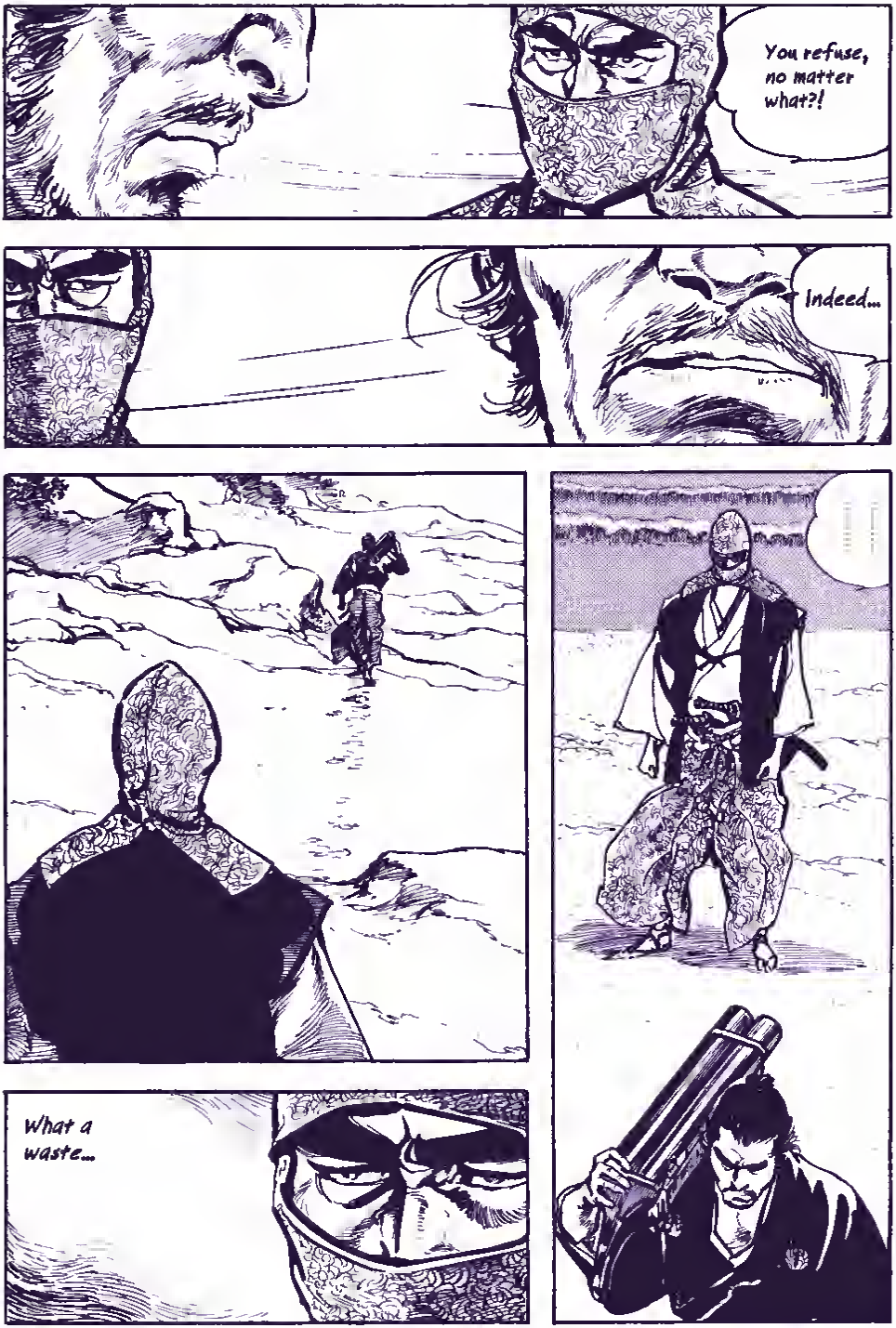
I am the Castle Elder, Naitou Kanando...
and I would like to speak with you.

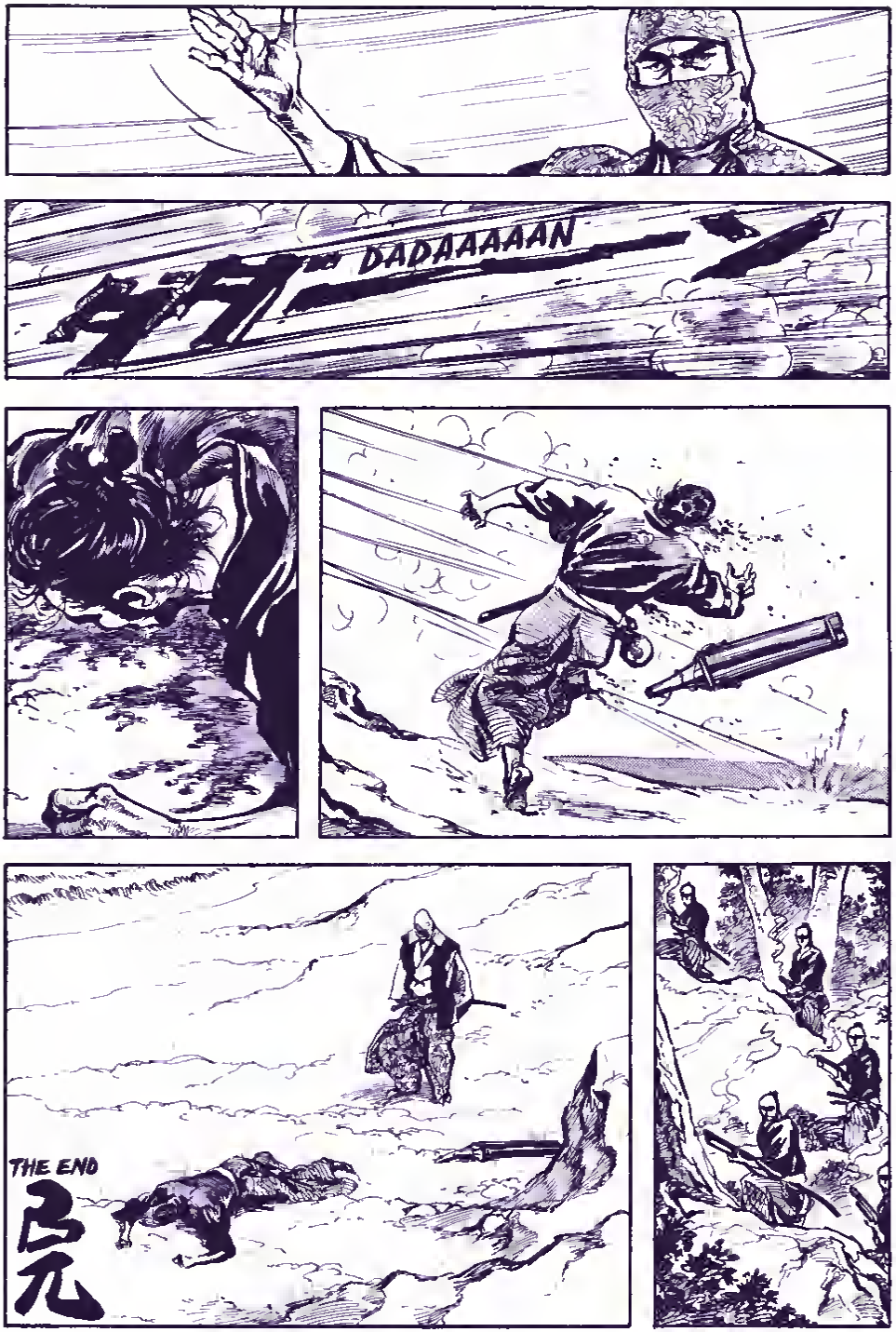

Follow me...

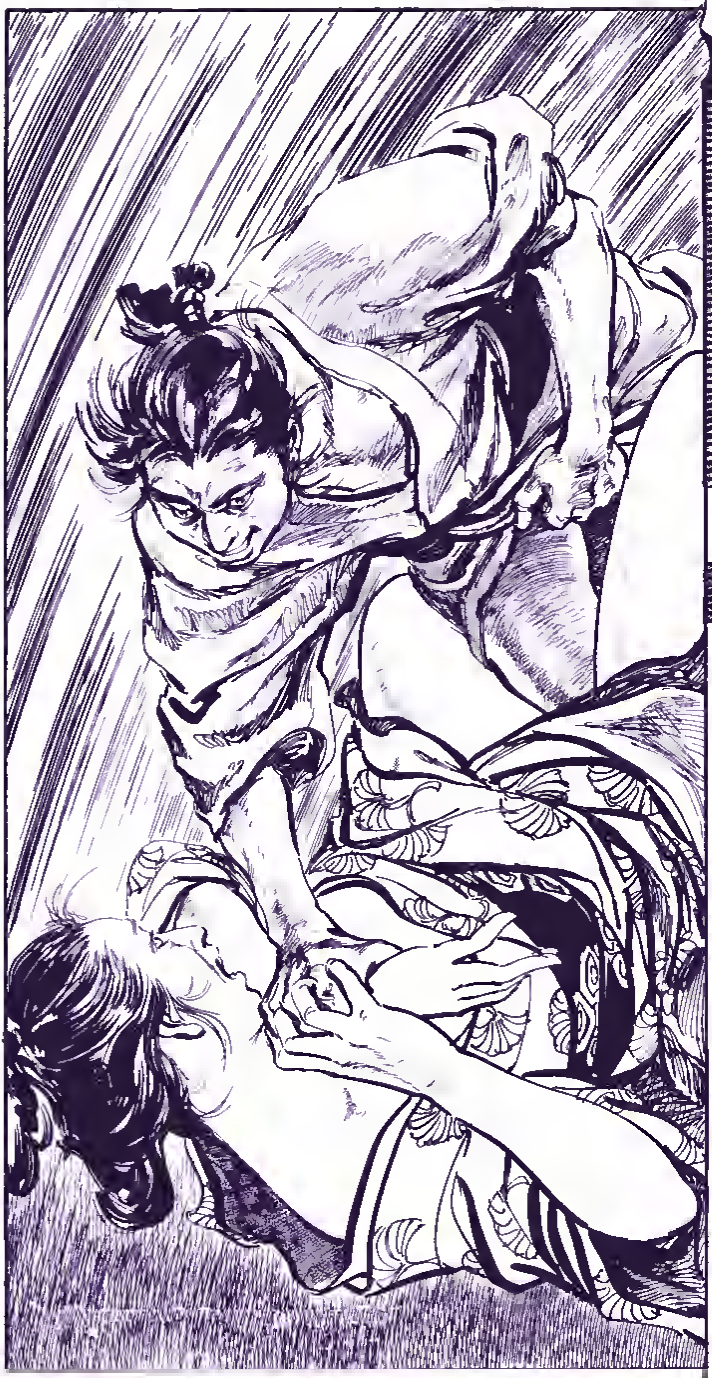

Wait.


That man used cannoneering to do so... and his weapon... was a 30kg cannon that could fire four shots at once...
After the castle of our lord's ancestors fell long ago and he escaped... there was a single man who protected the fleeing lord by shooting down his pursuers...


The lord, wishing to keep this technique secret and sacred, deemed that man the leader of a new house of cannoneering...
These secrets... are to be passed down to solely one child each generation, and are never to be revealed to anyone... that... was the rule... of your father's house...
If one's child... was unable to master the techniques, the father was to choose an adopted son to pass the secret art onto instead... then, one day tell this disciple:
Katou Danzou.
The Katou house and all that belongs to it still exists as it is... return and lead it!
must live out the rest of my life as a masterless wanderer...
No, I...
After all the bloodshed I have created...?


You refuse, no matter what?!
Indeed...
What a waste...


DADAAAAAN
THE END
完



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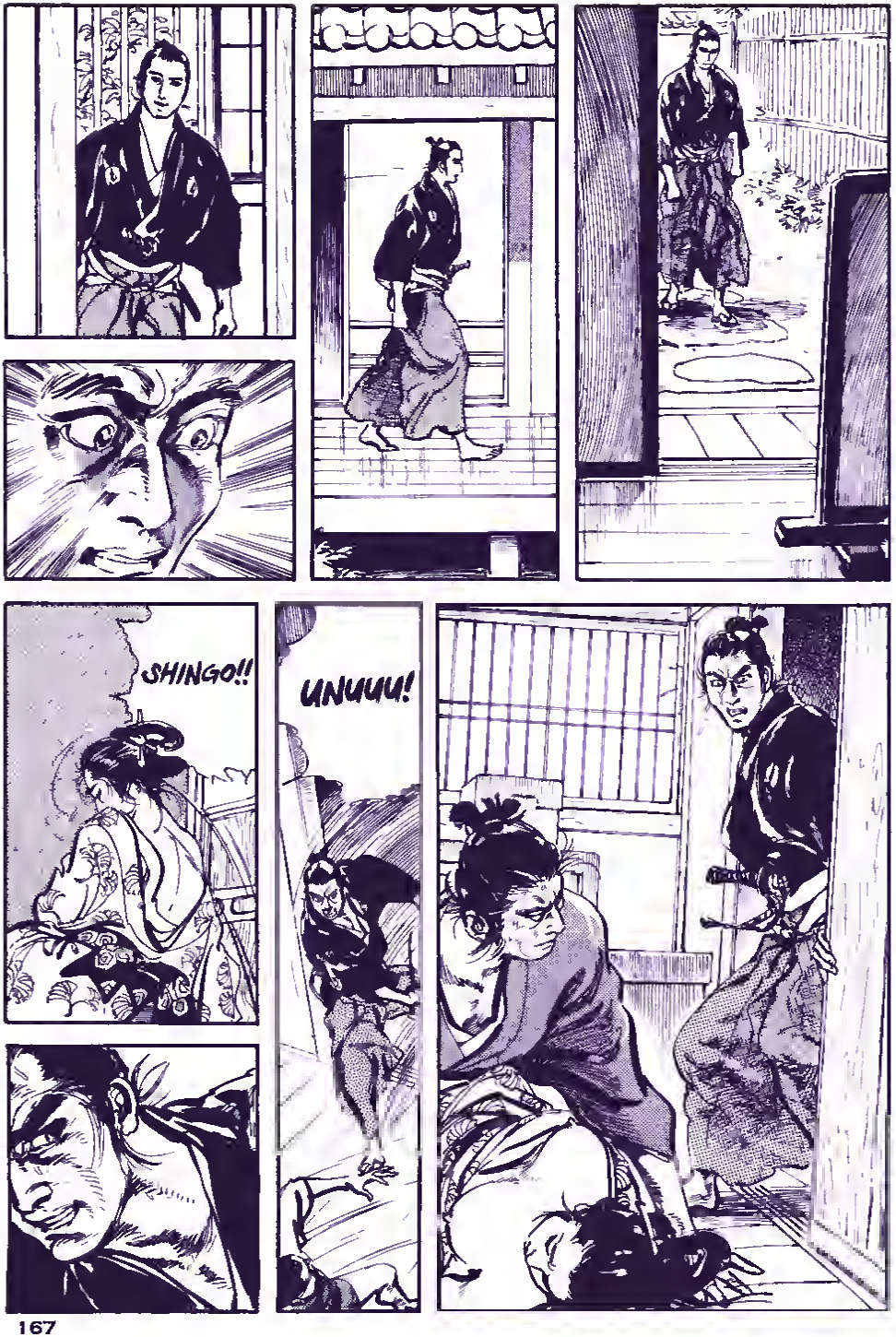
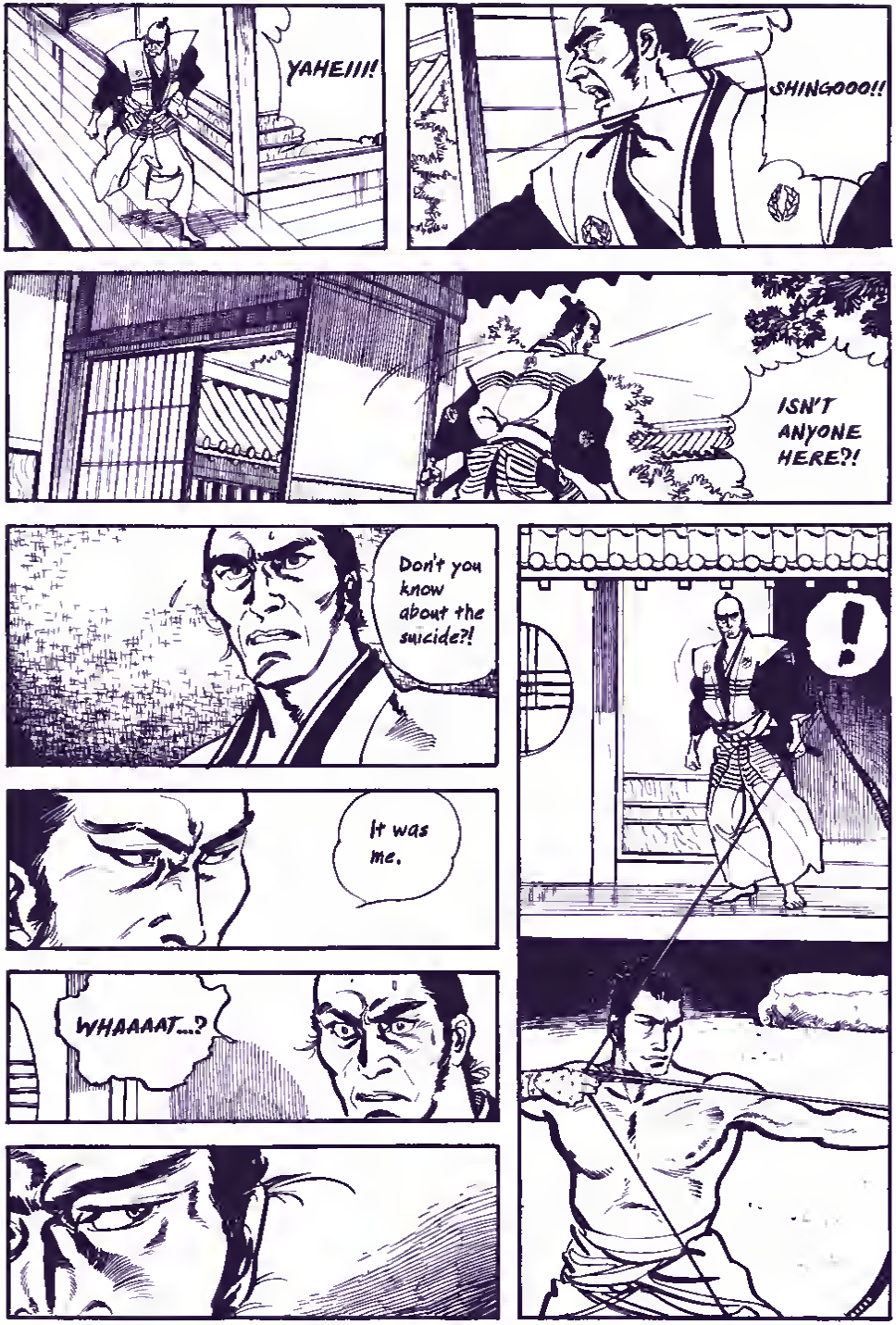
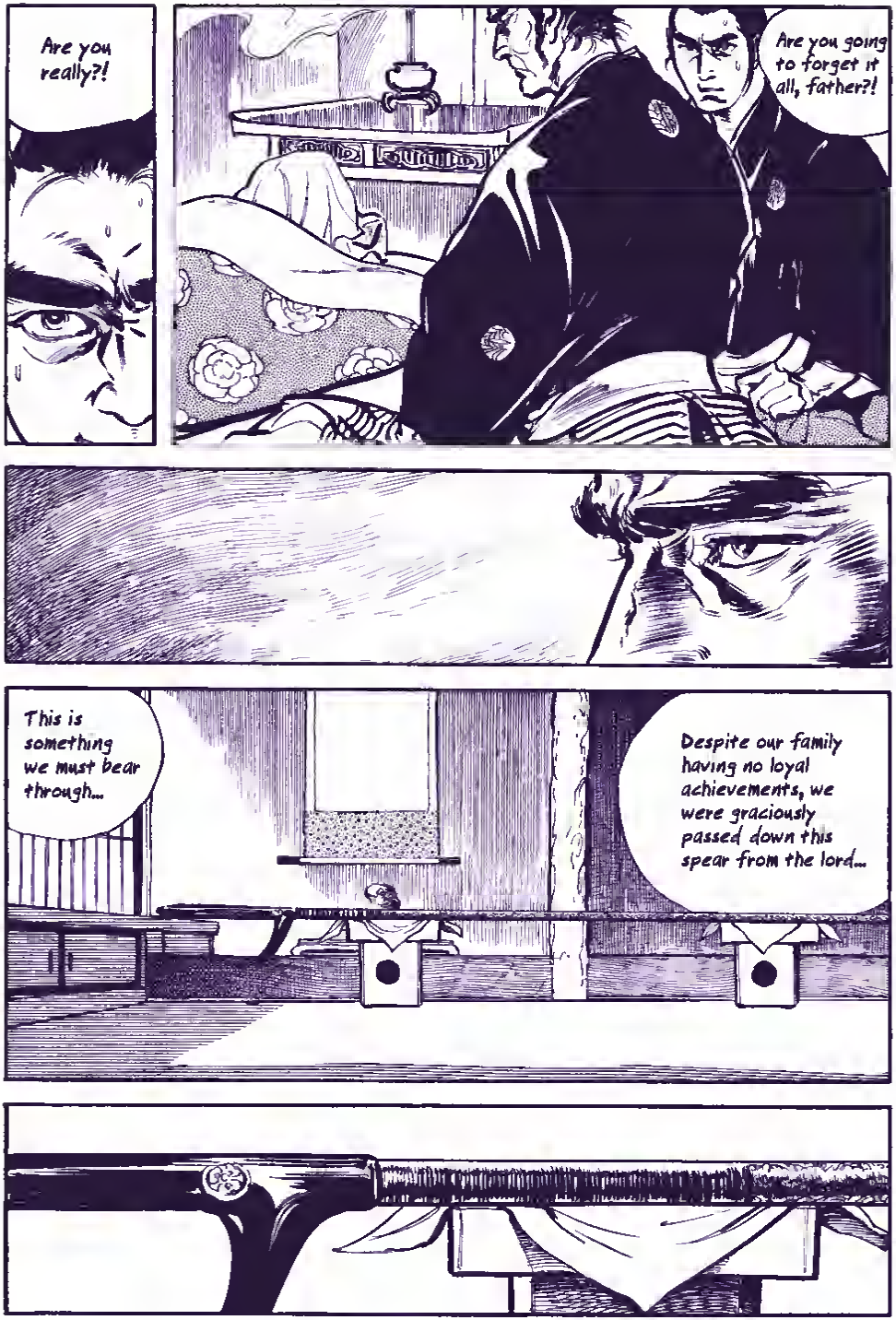
SPEAR OF DISSENT

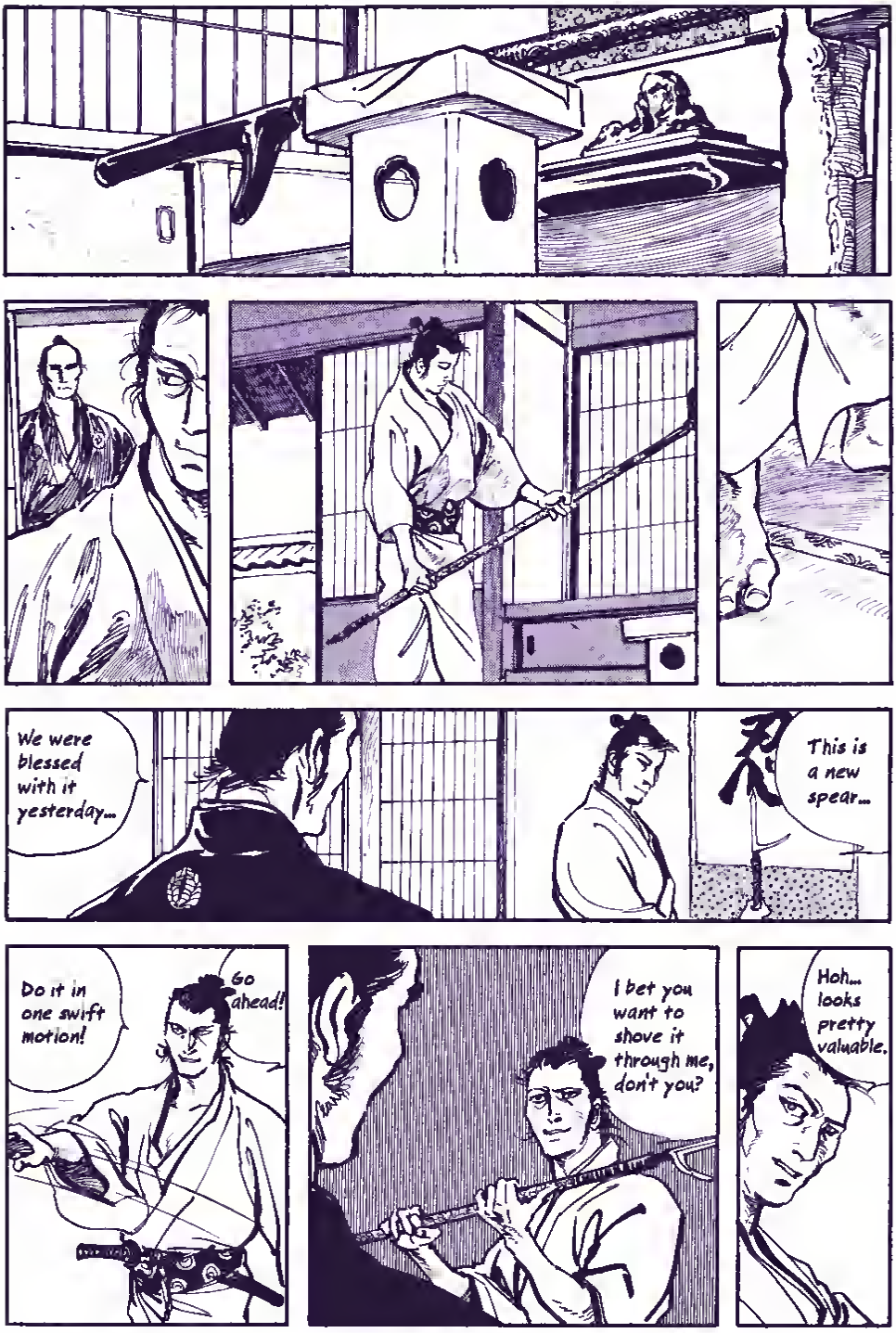

SHINGO!!
UNUUU!

Nuuuuu...
He is a man from our lord's house...
Why the long face?
Can't stand to look upon a freak like me, can you?
But unless you want the Hiwasa house to be destroyed, you'd better not cut me, Shingo.
DADAH

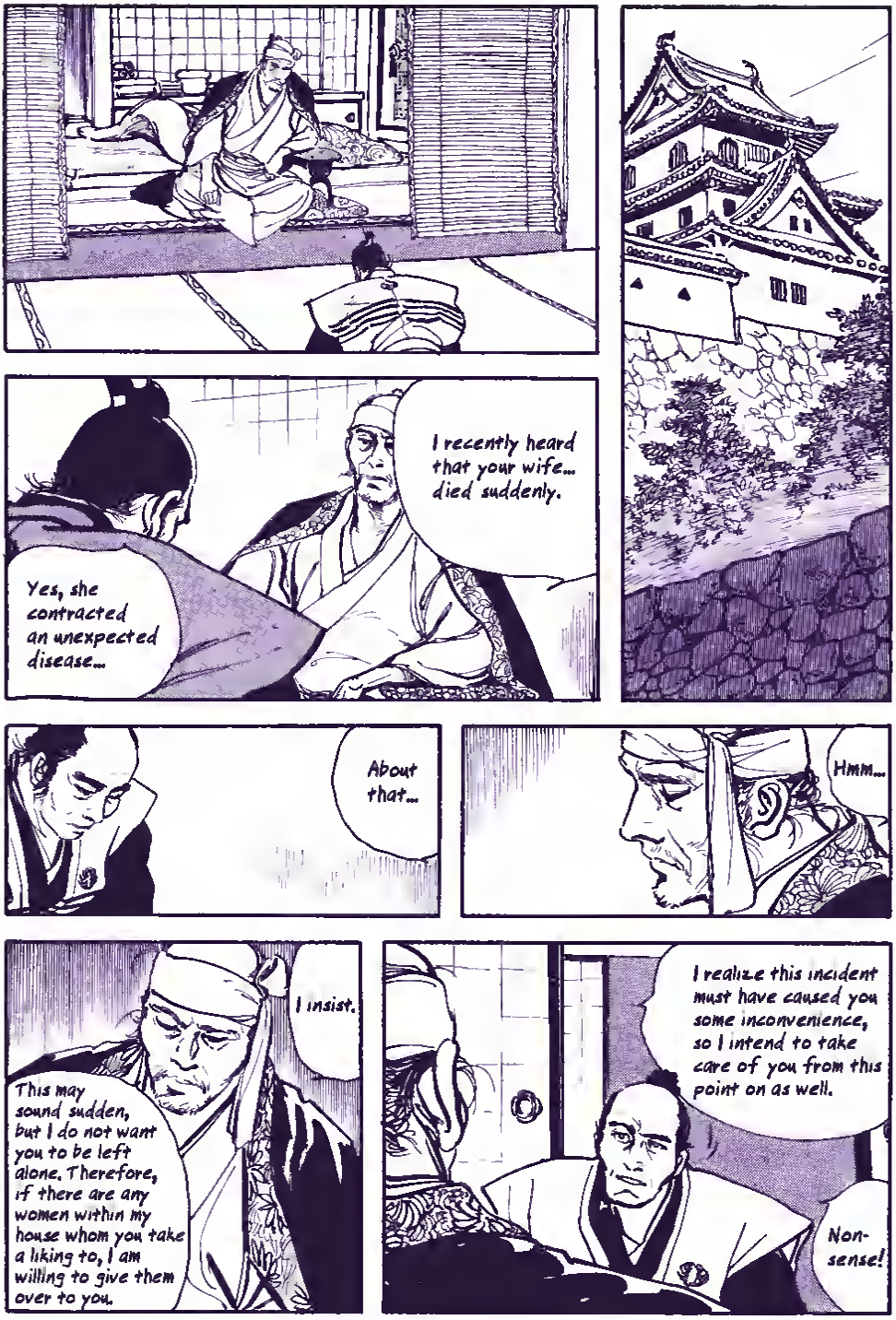
What's he in such a hurry for...?
?
How quiet!!
I have now returned!
That bum...
I can't hear a sound !!
What could he be up to...


YAHEIII!
SHINGOOO!!
ISN'T ANYONE HERE?!
Don't you know about the suicide?!
It was me.
WHAAAAT...?
!


Are you really?!
Are you going to forget it all, father?!
This is something we must bear through...
Despite our family having no loyal achievements, we were graciously passed down this spear from the lord...

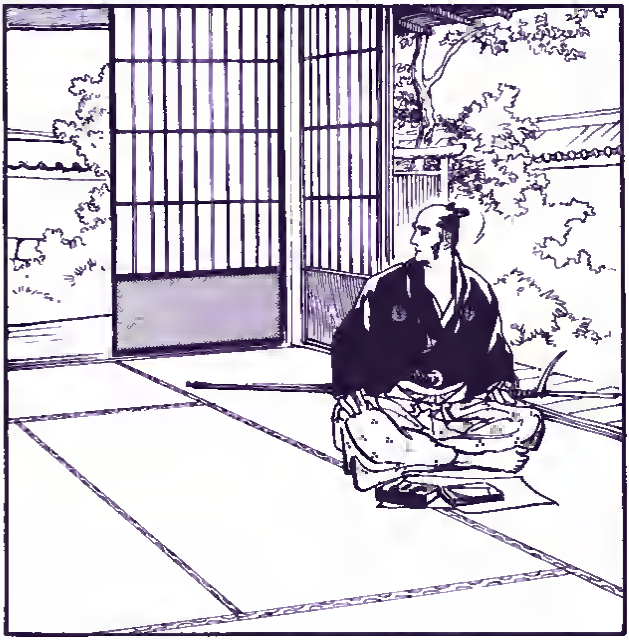

We were blessed with it yesterday...
This is a new spear...
Do it in one swift motion!
Go ahead!
I bet you want to shove it through me, don't you?
Hoh... looks pretty valuable.

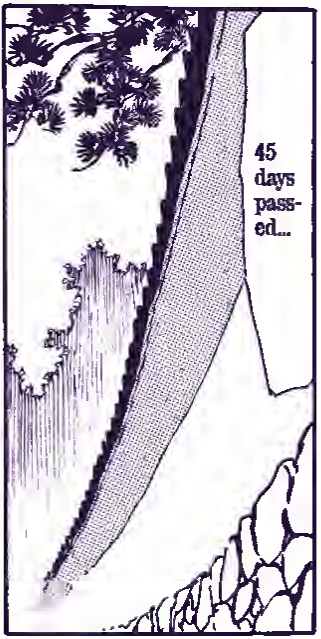
Please stop saying such things and resheath it.
BAN!


I recently heard that your wife... died suddenly.
Yes, she contracted an unexpected disease...
About that...
Hmm...
I insist.
This may sound sudden, but I do not want you to be left alone. Therefore, if there are any women within my house whom you take a liking to, I am willing to give them over to you.
I realize this incident must have caused you some inconvenience, so I intend to take care of you from this point on as well.
Non-sense!

Y-yes, sir, b-but...
It's better to decide now than later, just in case.
I don't think that I... can...
By the way...
How is your health?
No, no sir, please... excuse me.
Haha... what's wrong? Come on, out with it! What type of women do you fancy?
Sir,
I am in perfect health.
COUGH COUGH
ゴホ ゴホゴホ
Oh really? From what I hear, though, you haven't been doing too well...

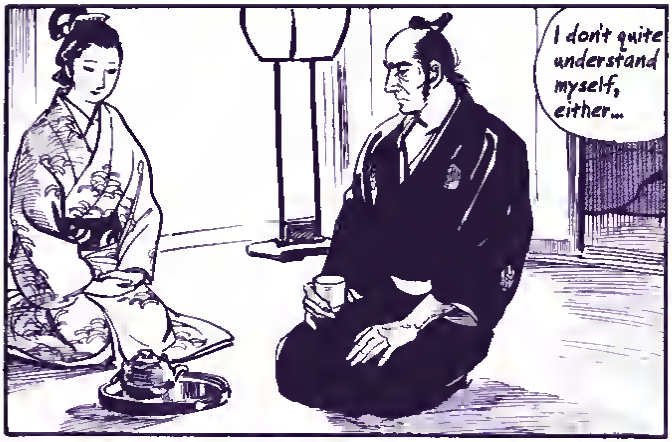
Tadateru died four days later.

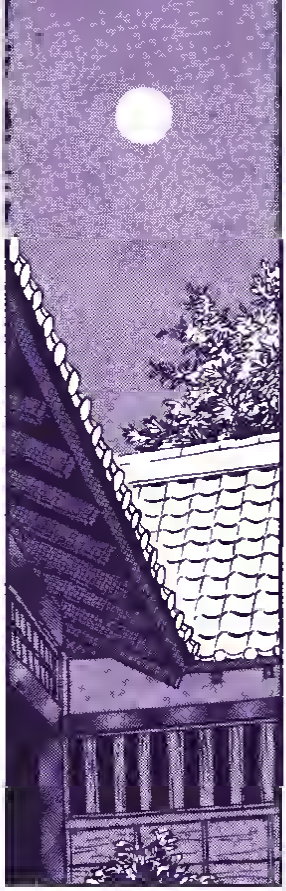




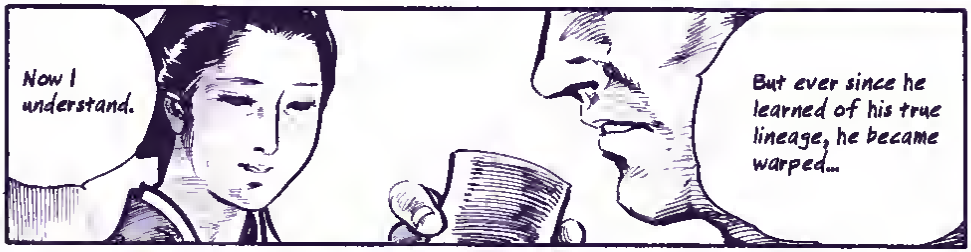
I am very inexperienced, but I shall do my best...
I have come under orders of the late lord.
Shingo!
Father!
Please see this woman out!
HAHAHA
What's the big deal? A family of three men is far from relaxing, you know.
HAHAHAHA
.....

What's that look for?
AHAHAHA!
It sure is hard to be an inferior human, even if you're part of the lord's line... ahaha!
Oh, I see, those eyes are expressing your true feelings toward the freak living here.

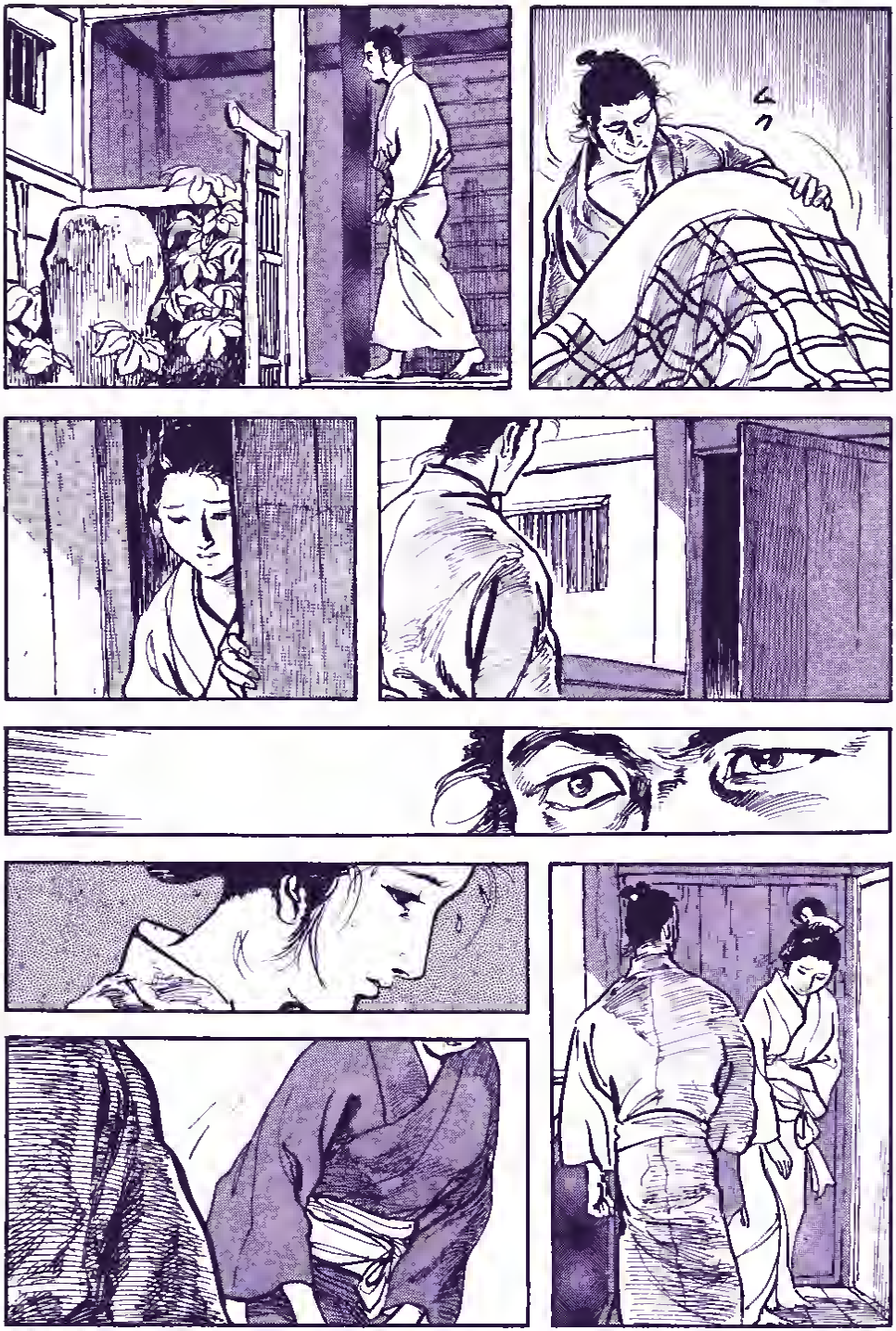

I don't quite understand myself, either...

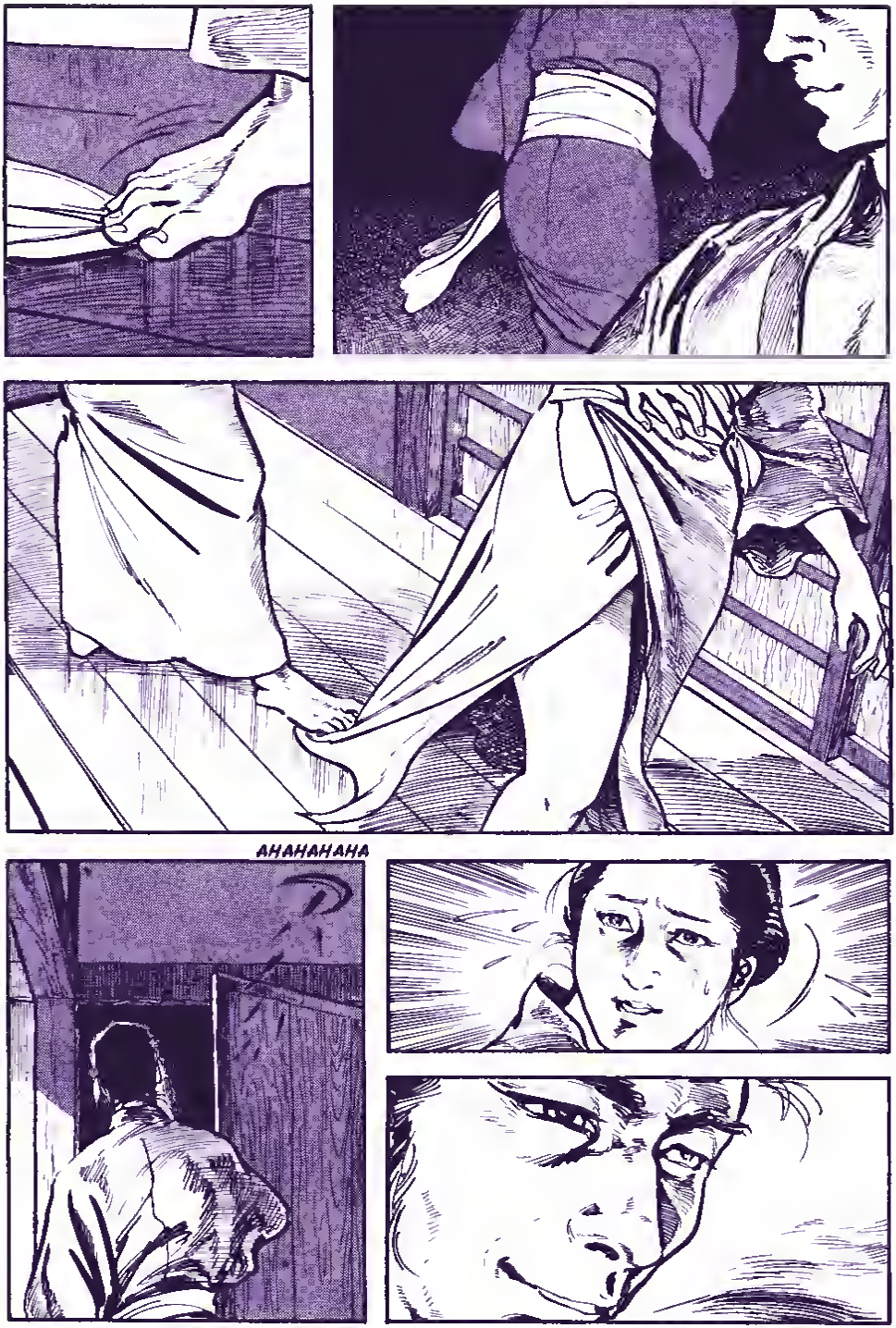


Just like he says, the blood of the lord's family runs through his veins...
It was just his bad luck that he was born as the twin of the current lord... he used to be a nice, quiet child...


Now I understand.
But ever since he learned of his true lineage, he became warped...

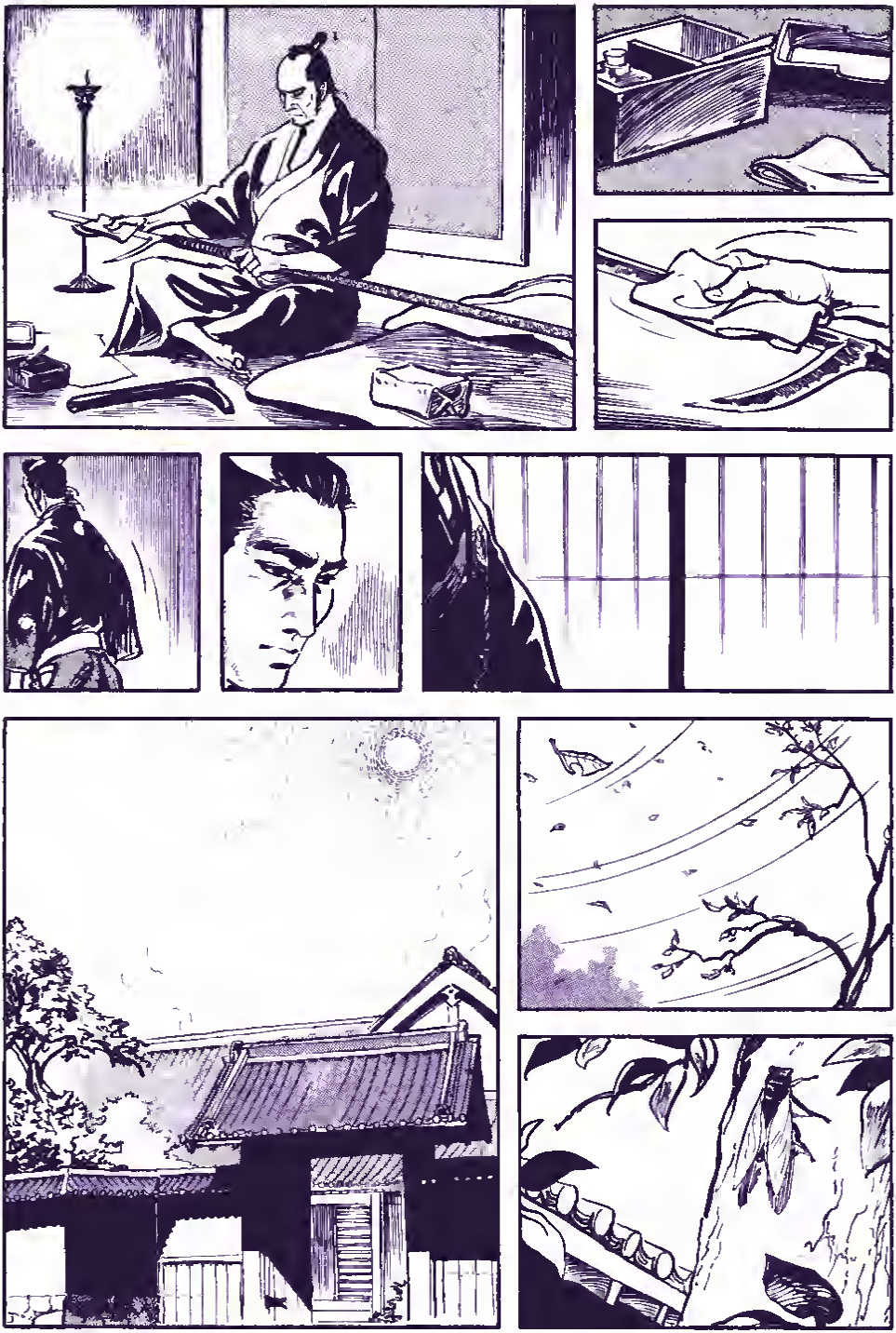
Please keep it at that.
I believe the late lord was concerned about your relationship... that is why he sent me here to take care of you...




AHAHAHAHA

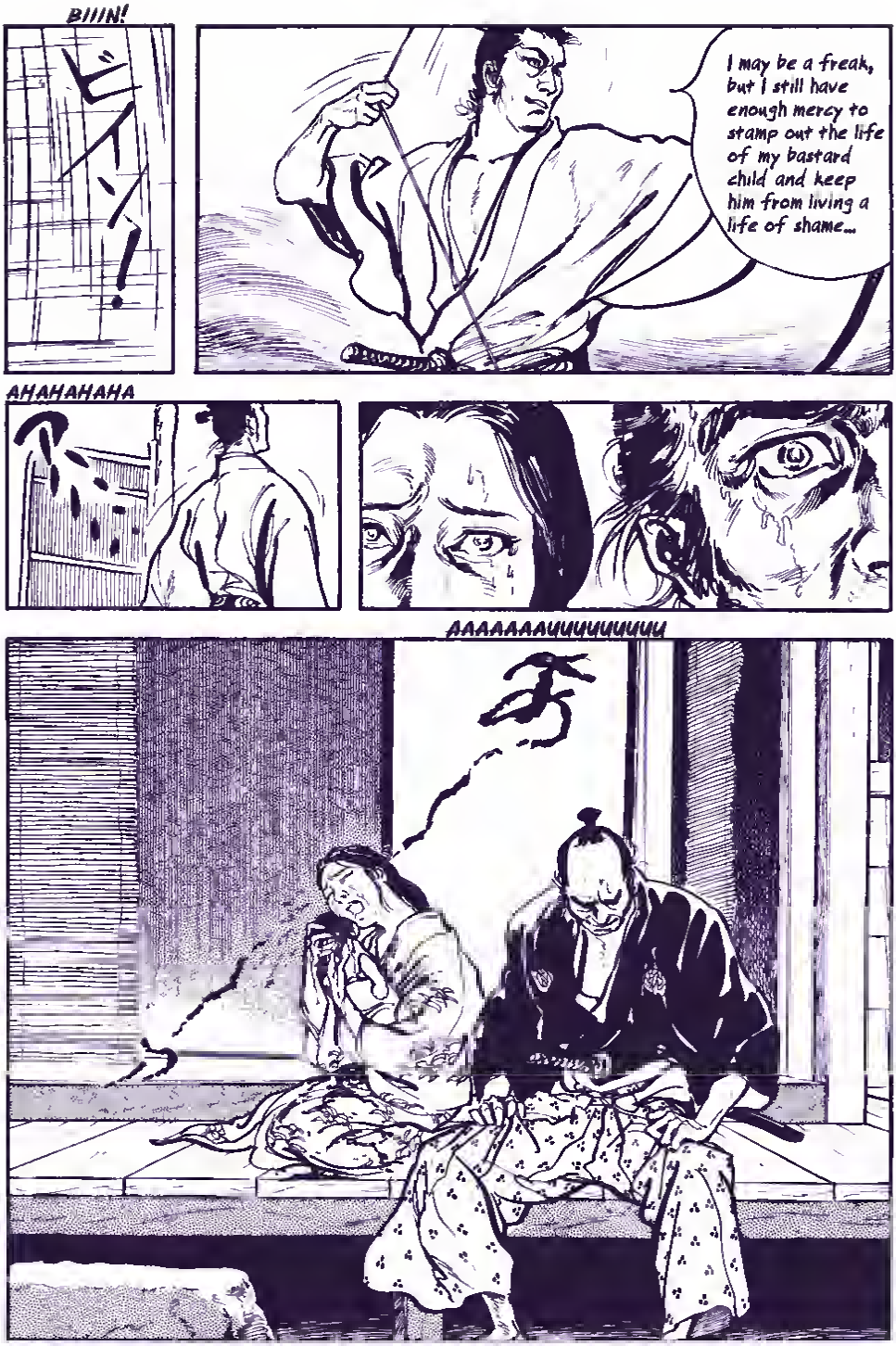
Do not say anything about this...
And become Genzaburou's wife from this day forward.
That is the only way to keep the peace in this house...
yuuu!
Good work staying alive and waiting for my return.
Please do not ever think of suicide in the future, either.

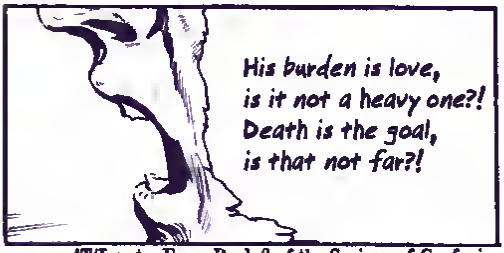
Aya!
Come here!
Forget it, just forget it...



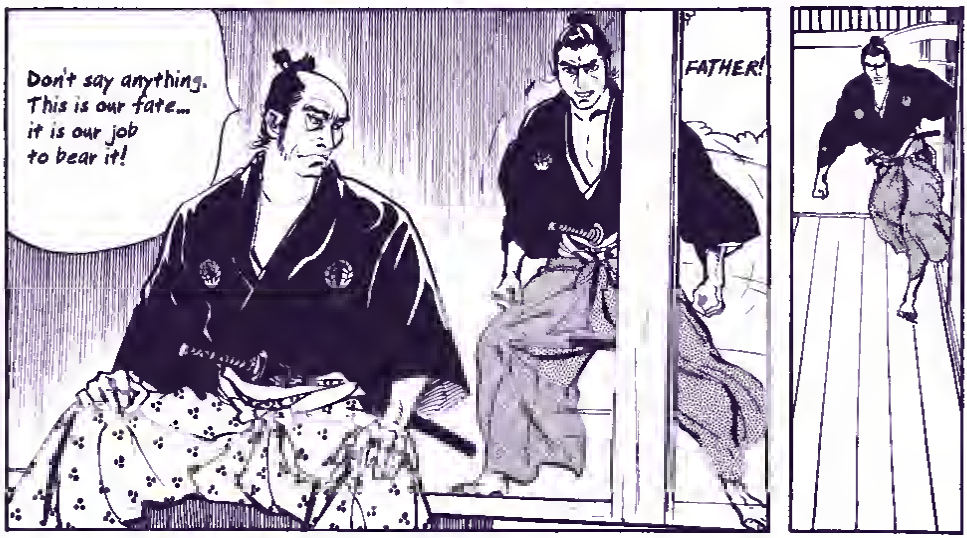
HAHAHA
Theeeere, theeere! Good boy!
HYUUUUUH!
ヒュウッ!
KABYUH!
ガッ!

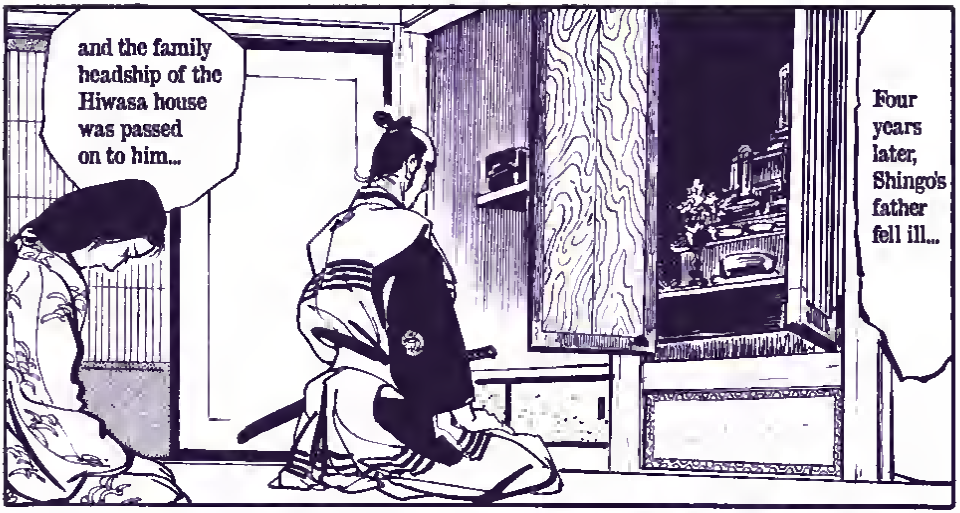
HAHAHAHAHAHA
WHAT HAVE YOU DOOONE?!
What's wrong?

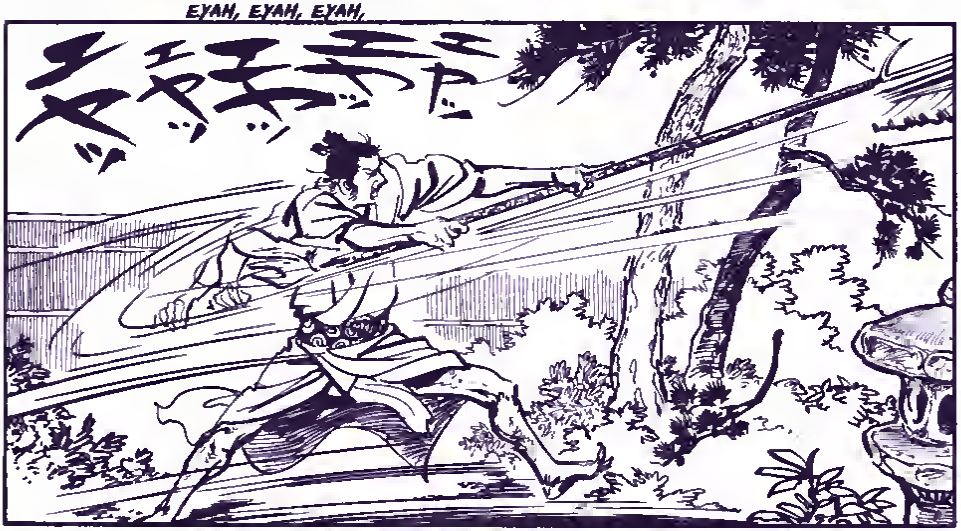

BIIIN!
ビィィン!
I may be a freak, but I still have enough mercy to stamp out the life of my bastard child and keep him from living a life of shame...
AHAHAHAHA
AAAAAAAUUUUUUUUU

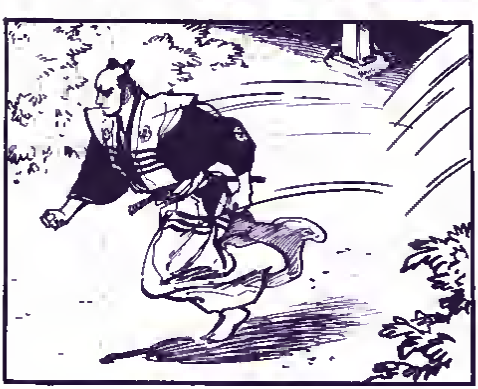


*T/L note: From Book 8 of the Sayings of Confucius

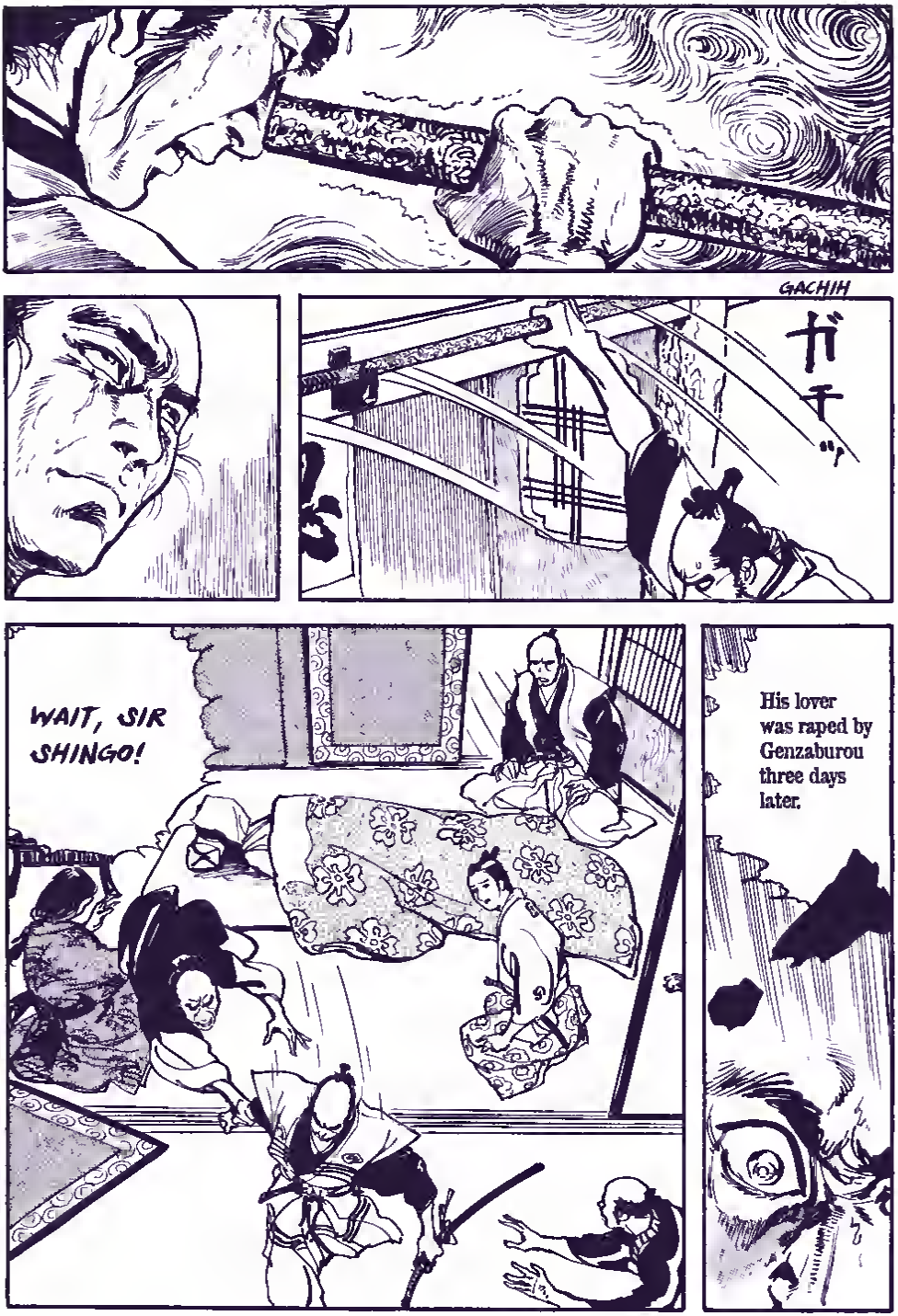



and the family headship of the Hiwasa house was passed on to him...
Four years later, Shingo's father fell ill...


EYAH, EYAH, EYAH,

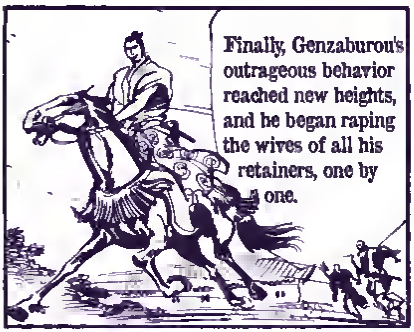


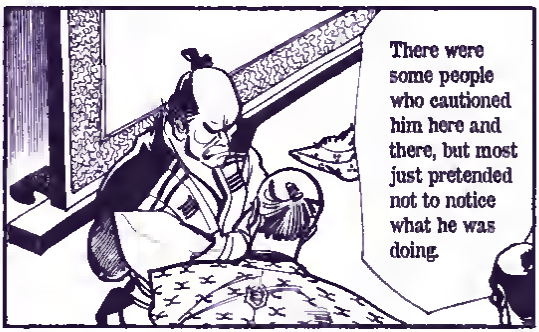
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!
//"
Hoh...
That's some attitude you've got there.
This is my father's beloved spear! Do not touch it!
AYA, COME!
It's about time you stopped acting like the master of this house.


GACHIH
ガチ
WAIT, SIR SHINGO!
His lover was raped by Genzaburou three days later.

However! You must stop, Sir Shingo!
We are filled with pain! We had been counting down the days until the time when that woman would become your wife!
Are you telling me to let him live because of that?!
Are there any other possible candi-dates?!
The Chief Retainers have been discussing late into each night what to do about the succession!
The conditions of the ill lord have gotten worse this past month. You should be aware of this!
If we don't, we will all lose our name and status!
We must bear this, so that our house shall live on.

Genzaburou became the leader of the clan, and had free range to do whatever he wanted.


Finally, Genzaburou's outrageous behavior reached new heights, and he began raping the wives of all his retainers, one by one.


There were some people who cautioned him here and there, but most just pretended not to notice what he was doing.

He would force each one to stay the night with him and then send them home in the morning.

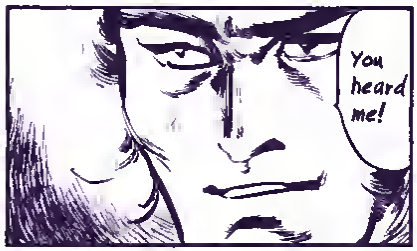
Long time no see.
Ohh, Shingo!

I wouldn't say that! I'm just being used as a tool so that the clan's name will continue on, you know!!
Seems like you are fully enjoying all the benefits that come with lordship...

And yet, you are abusing your power to a perverted degree in order to abduct the wives of your retainers.
The Chief Retainers are taking care of all the politics. I'm nothing but a puppet!

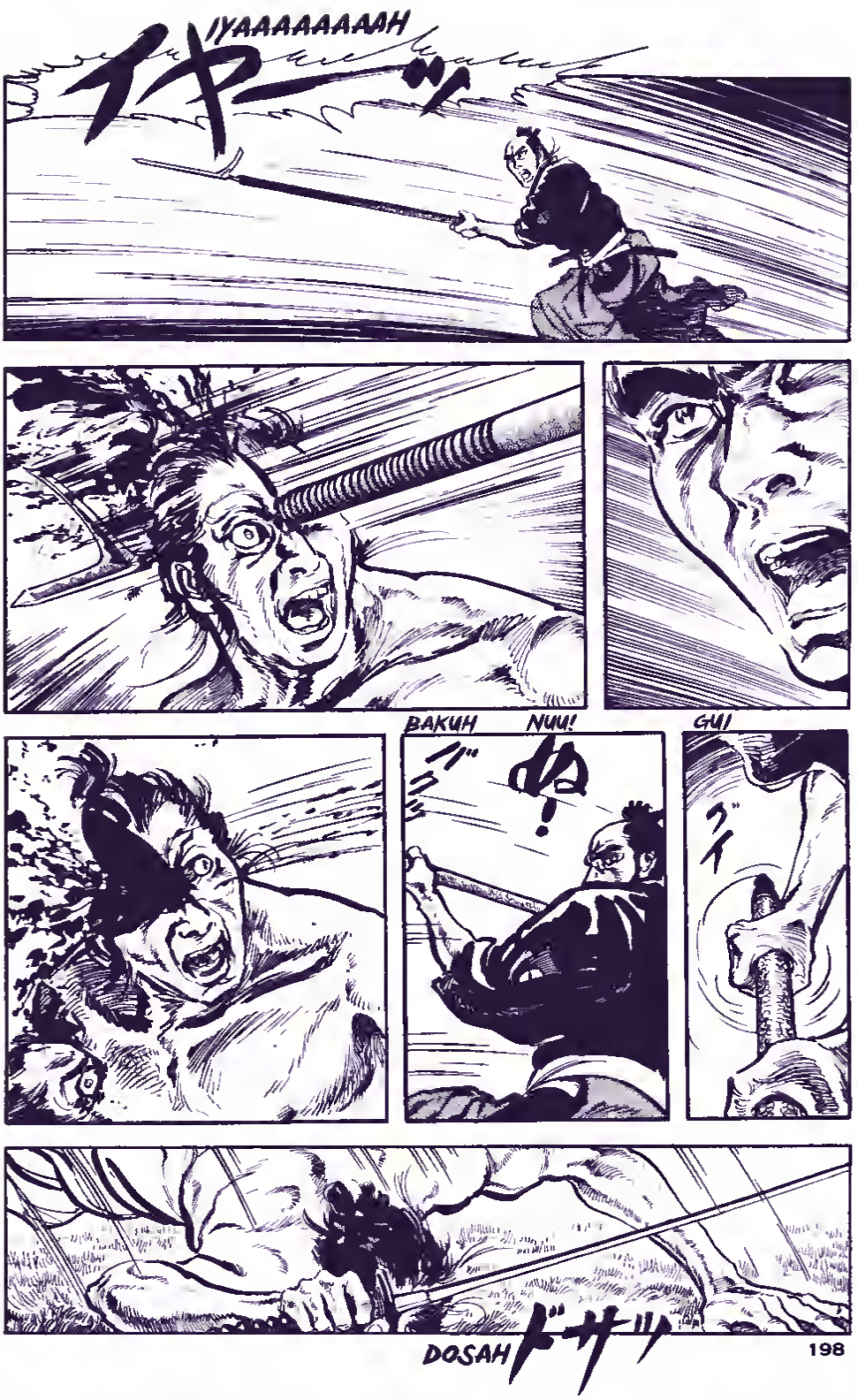
THE WORDS OF A COWARD LIKE YOU MEAN NOTHING TO ME!
FOOL!

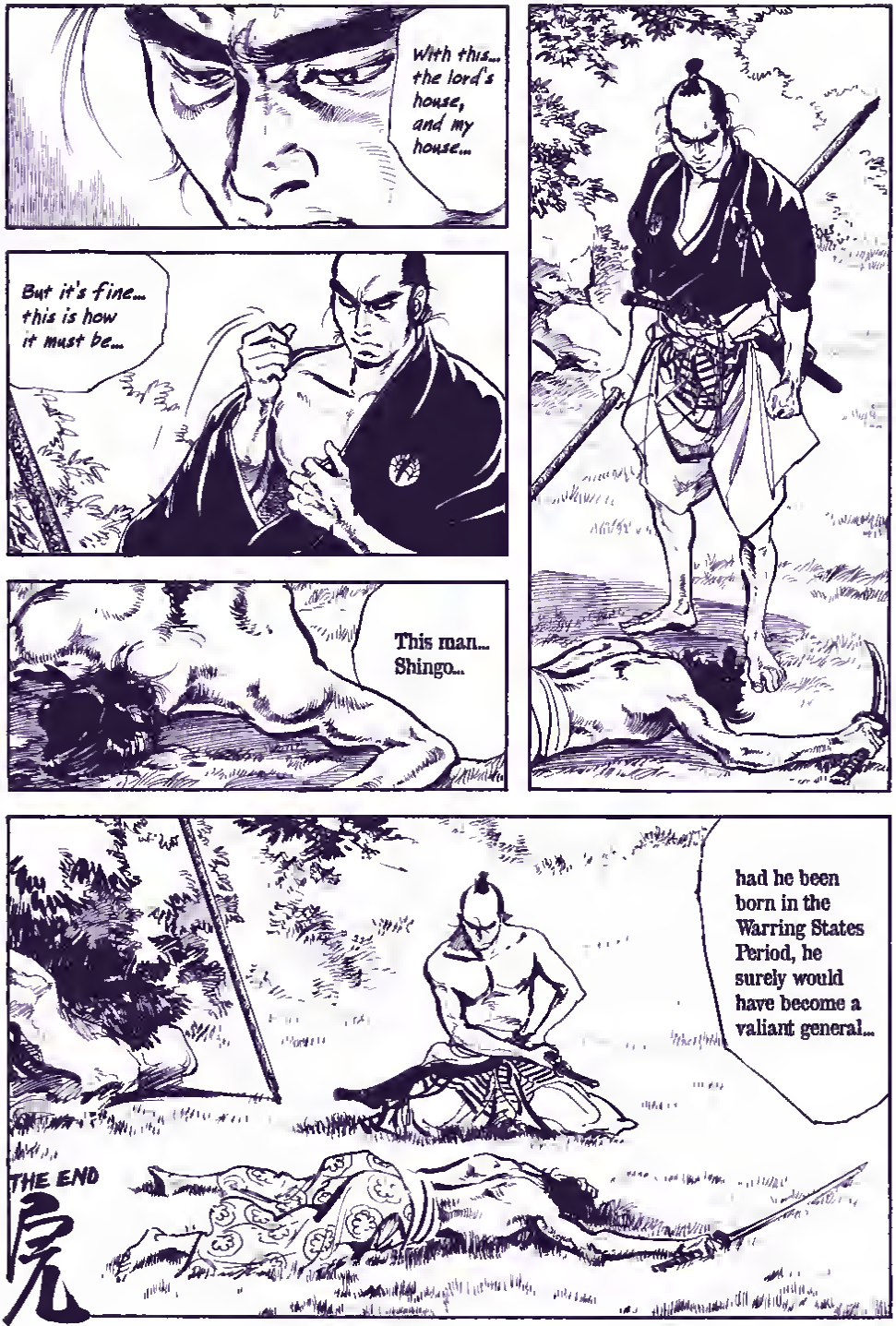
Hoh... so you came here to try and obstruct my freedom, huh?

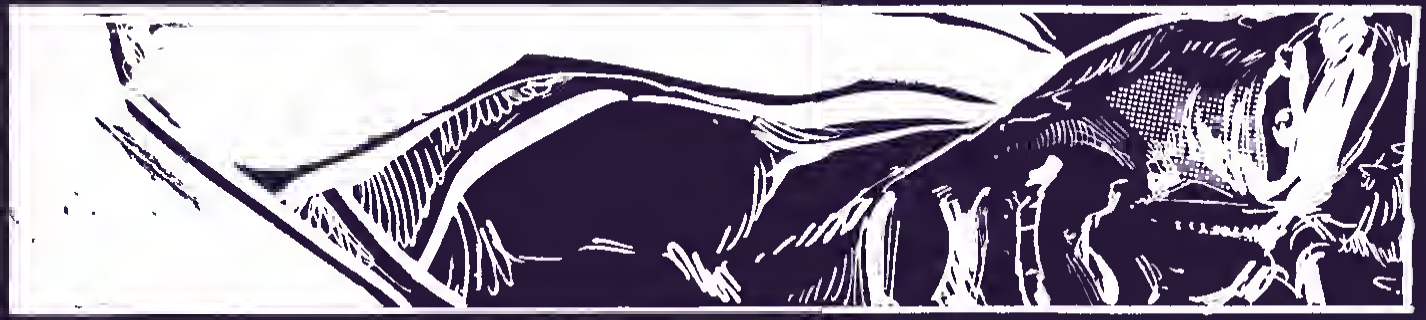

You heard me!

Coward?!

What stupidity! I could hardly stand to be surrounded by such infernal cowards!
My house, my house, my house! That's all that ever goes through your head, as you continue to foolishly bear even the worst of crimes!
What amusing words...
How about this, then...? You sit there as this coward passes judgement unto you with this spear...
Hilarious!


IYAAAAAAAAH
イヤーッ
BAKUH
NUU!
GUI
ドサッ
DOSAH

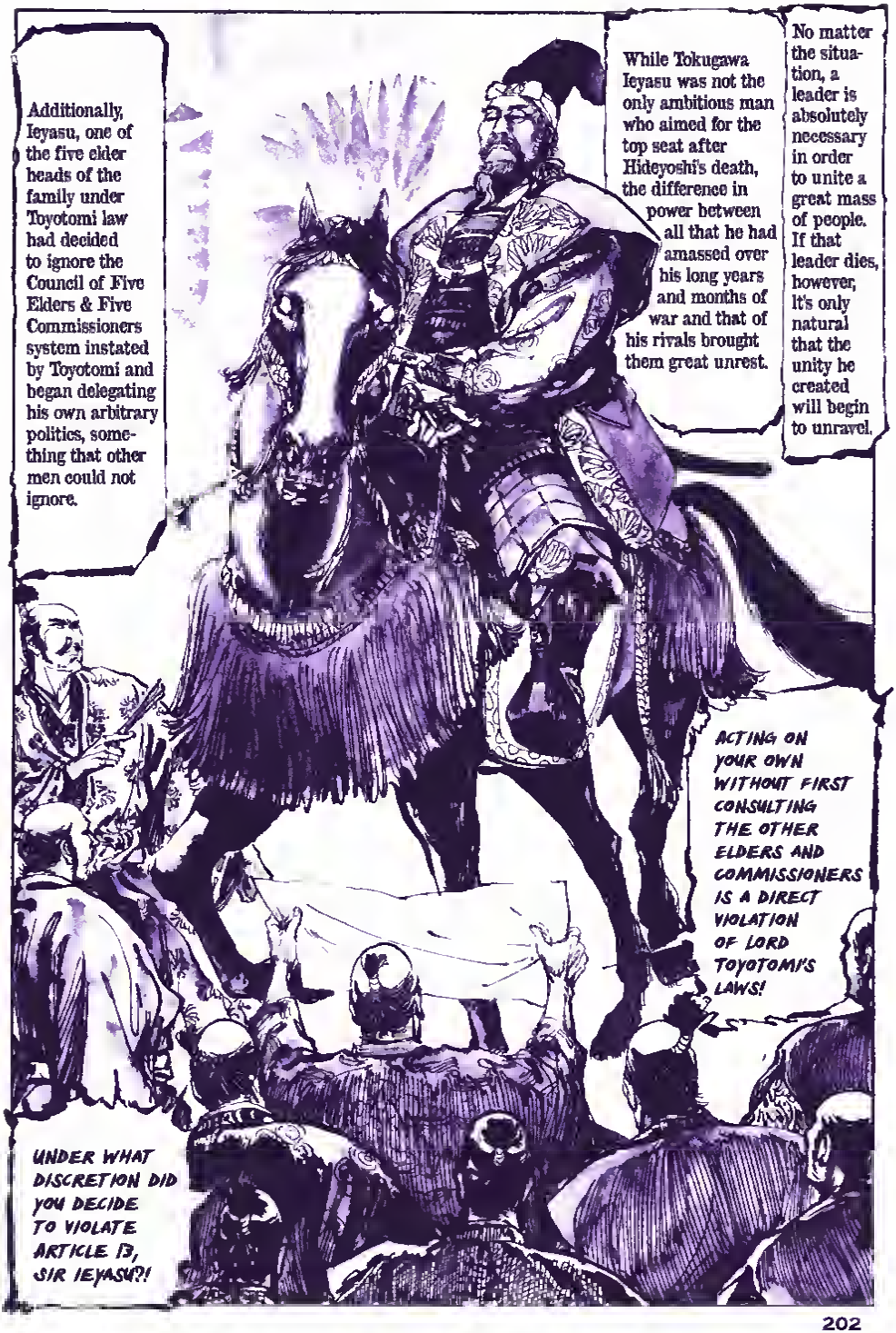

With this... the lord's house, and my house...
But it's fine... this is how it must be...
This man... Shingo...
had he been born in the Warring States Period, he surely would have become a valiant general...
THE END
尻

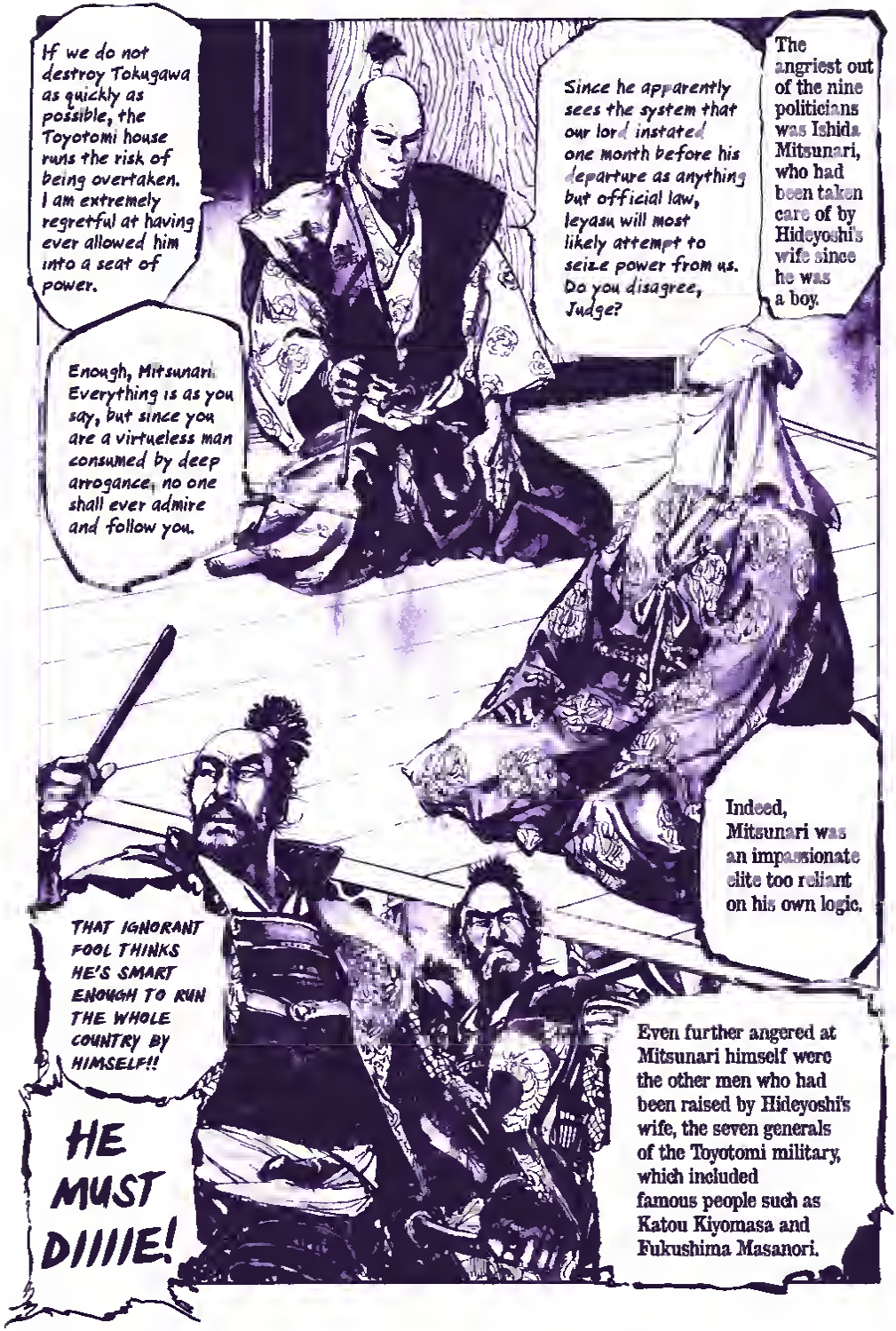


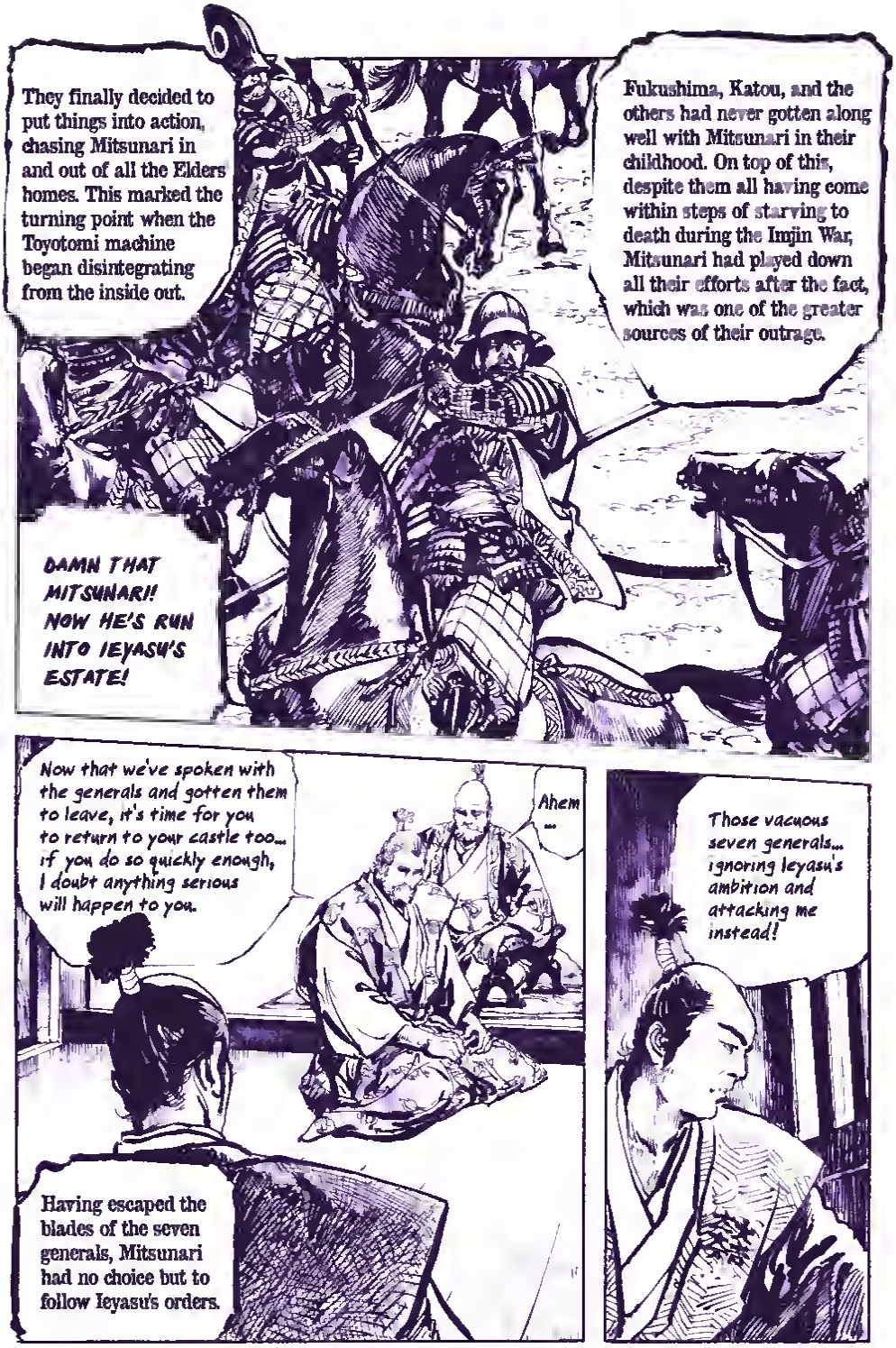
NO ONE MAY WISH FOR WAR, BUT...

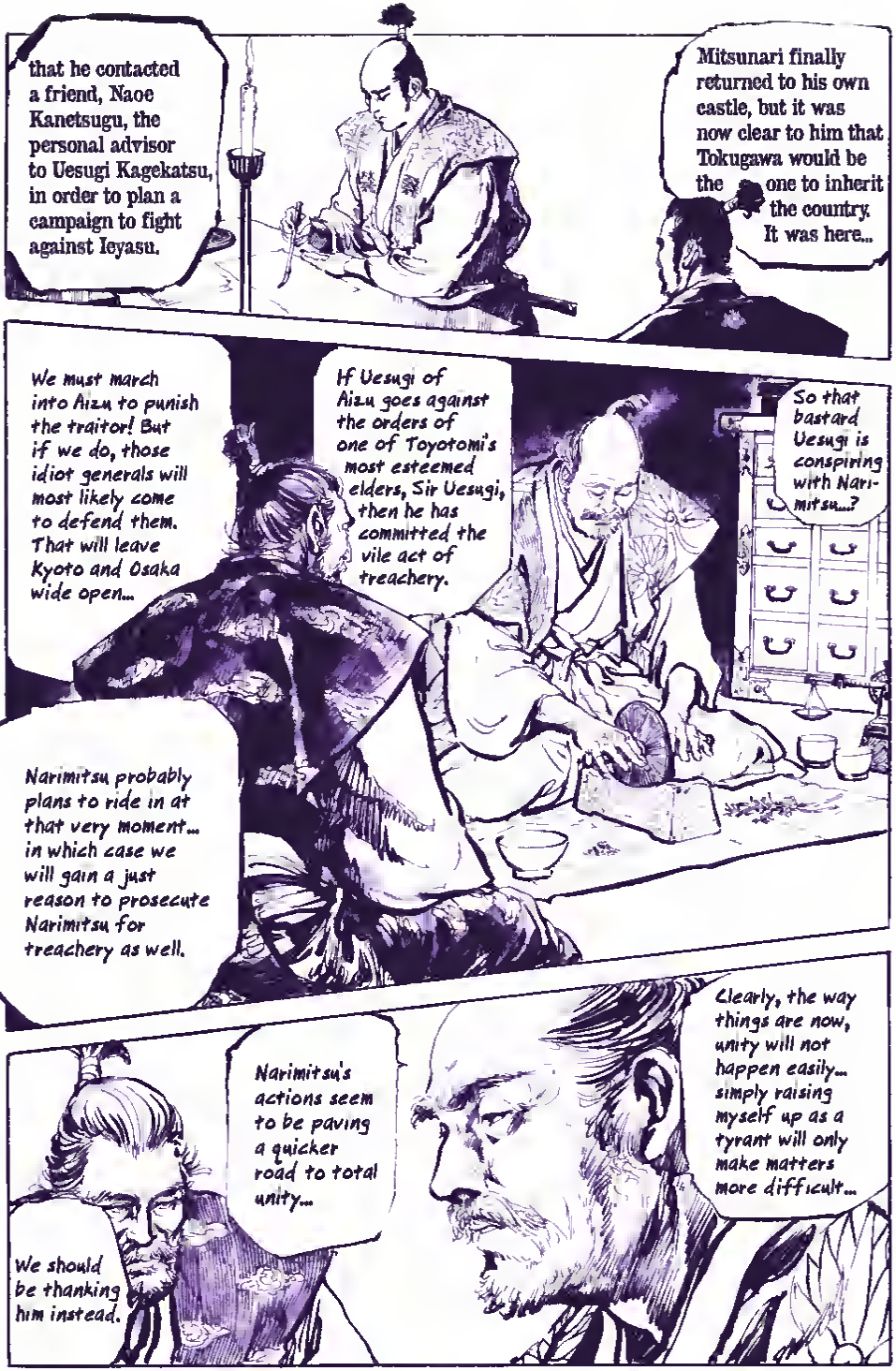
THE ILLUSTRATED BATTLE OF SEKIGAHARA

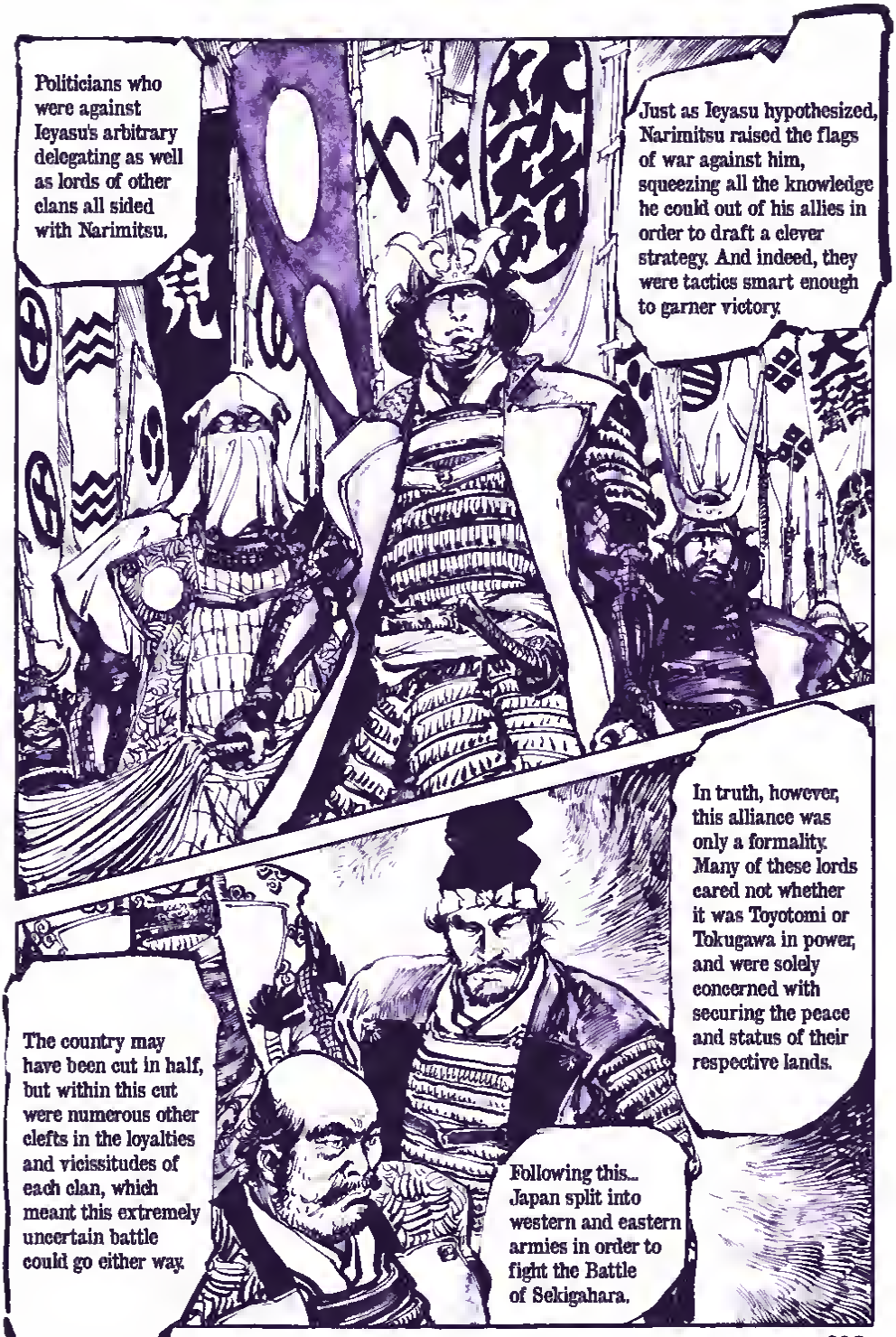
誰も戦を望まぬが…
劇画 関ガ原合戦
In the last years of Toyotomi Hideyoshi, the great hero who brought Japan out of the chaos of the Warring States Period into a time of peace, he began to go mad with greed and died at age 62.
Two years later, the Battle of Sekigahara began— a battle that was bound to happen.

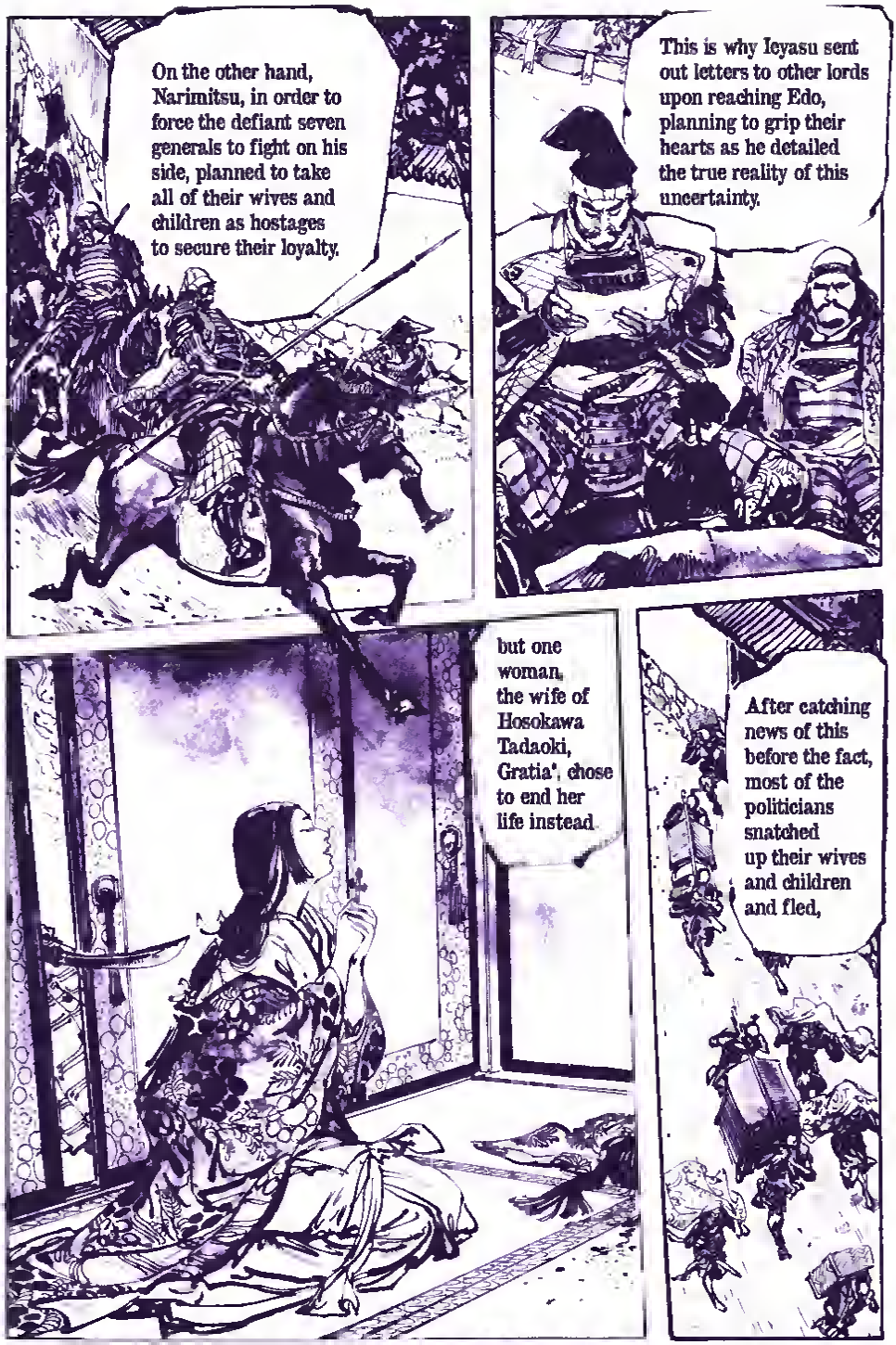

Additionally, Ieyasu, one of the five elder heads of the family under Toyotomi law had decided to ignore the Council of Five Elders & Five Commissioners system instated by Toyotomi and began delegating his own arbitrary politics, something that other men could not ignore.
While Tokugawa Ieyasu was not the only ambitious man who aimed for the top seat after Hideyoshi's death, the difference in power between all that he had amassed over his long years and months of war and that of his rivals brought them great unrest.
No matter the situation, a leader is absolutely necessary in order to unite a great mass of people. If that leader dies, however, It's only natural that the unity he created will begin to unravel.
ACTING ON YOUR OWN WITHOUT FIRST CONSULTING THE OTHER ELDERS AND COMMISSIONERS IS A DIRECT VIOLATION OF LORD TOYOTOMI'S LAWS!
UNDER WHAT DISCRETION DID YOU DECIDE TO VIOLATE ARTICLE 13, SIR IEYASU?!


If we do not destroy Tokugawa as quickly as possible, the Toyotomi house runs the risk of being overtaken. I am extremely regretful at having ever allowed him into a seat of power.
Enough, Mitsunari. Everything is as you say, but since you are a virtueless man consumed by deep arrogance, no one shall ever admire and follow you.
Since he apparently sees the system that our lord instated one month before his departure as anything but official law, Ieyasu will most likely attempt to seize power from us. Do you disagree, Judge?
The angriest out of the nine politicians was Ishida Mitsunari, who had been taken care of by Hideyoshi's wife since he was a boy.
Indeed, Mitsunari was an impassionate elite too reliant on his own logic.
THAT IGNORANT FOOL THINKS HE'S SMART ENOUGH TO RUN THE WHOLE COUNTRY BY HIMSELF!!
HE MUST DIIIE!
Even further angered at Mitsunari himself were the other men who had been raised by Hideyoshi's wife, the seven generals of the Toyotomi military, which included famous people such as Katou Kiyomasa and Fukushima Masanori.


They finally decided to put things into action, chasing Mitsunari in and out of all the Elders' homes. This marked the turning point when the Toyotomi machine began disintegrating from the inside out.
Fukushima, Katou, and the others had never gotten along well with Mitsunari in their childhood. On top of this, despite them all having come within steps of starving to death during the Imjin War, Mitsunari had played down all their efforts after the fact, which was one of the greater sources of their outrage.
DAMN THAT MITSUNARI! NOW HE'S RUN INTO IEYASU'S ESTATE!
Now that we've spoken with the generals and gotten them to leave, it's time for you to return to your castle too... if you do so quickly enough, I doubt anything serious will happen to you.
Ahem...
Having escaped the blades of the seven generals, Mitsunari had no choice but to follow Ieyasu's orders.
Those vacuous seven generals... ignoring Ieyasu's ambition and attacking me instead!

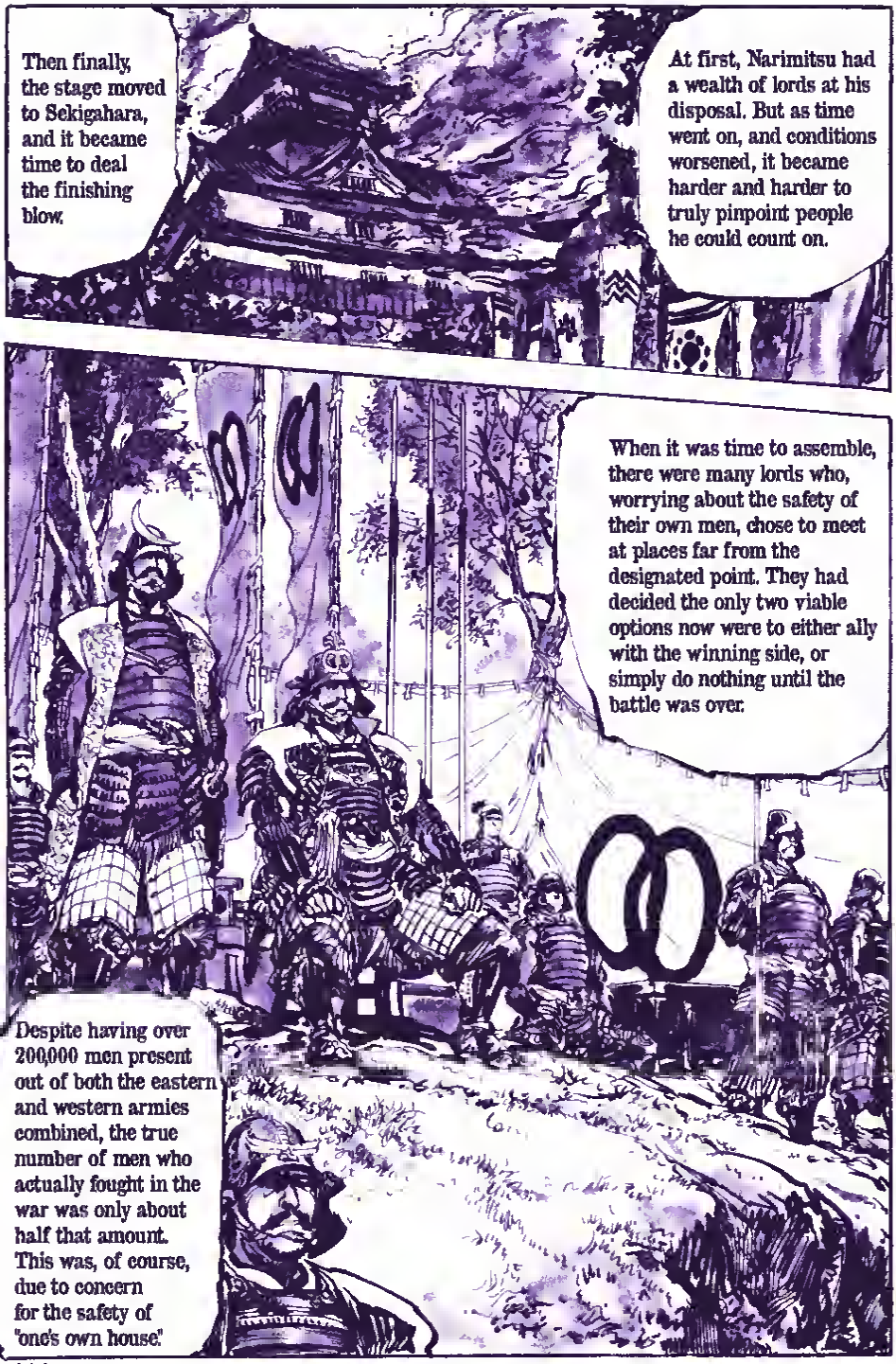

that he contacted a friend, Naoe Kanetsugu, the personal advisor to Uesugi Kagekatsu, in order to plan a campaign to fight against Ieyasu.
Mitsunari finally returned to his own castle, but it was now clear to him that Tokugawa would be the one to inherit the country. It was here...
We must march into Aizu to punish the traitor! But if we do, those idiot generals will most likely come to defend them. That will leave Kyoto and Osaka wide open...
If Uesugi of Aizu goes against the orders of one of Toyotomi's most esteemed elders, Sir Uesugi, then he has committed the vile act of treachery.
So that bastard Uesugi is conspiring with Narimitsu...?
Narimitsu probably plans to ride in at that very moment... in which case we will gain a just reason to prosecute Narimitsu for treachery as well.
Clearly, the way things are now, unity will not happen easily... simply raising myself up as a tyrant will only make matters more difficult...
Narimitsu's actions seem to be paving a quicker road to total unity...
We should be thanking him instead.


Politicians who were against Ieyasu's arbitrary delegating as well as lords of other clans all sided with Narimitsu.
Just as Ieyasu hypothesized, Narimitsu raised the flags of war against him, squeezing all the knowledge he could out of his allies in order to draft a clever strategy. And indeed, they were tactics smart enough to garner victory.
In truth, however, this alliance was only a formality. Many of these lords cared not whether it was Toyotomi or Tokugawa in power, and were solely concerned with securing the peace and status of their respective lands.
The country may have been cut in half, but within this cut were numerous other clefts in the loyalties and vicissitudes of each clan, which meant this extremely uncertain battle could go either way.
Following this... Japan split into western and eastern armies in order to fight the Battle of Sekigahara.


On the other hand, Narimitsu, in order to force the defiant seven generals to fight on his side, planned to take all of their wives and children as hostages to secure their loyalty.
This is why Ieyasu sent out letters to other lords upon reaching Edo, planning to grip their hearts as he detailed the true reality of this uncertainty.
but one woman, the wife of Hosokawa Tadaoki, Gratia*, chose to end her life instead.
After catching news of this before the fact, most of the politicians snatched up their wives and children and fled,

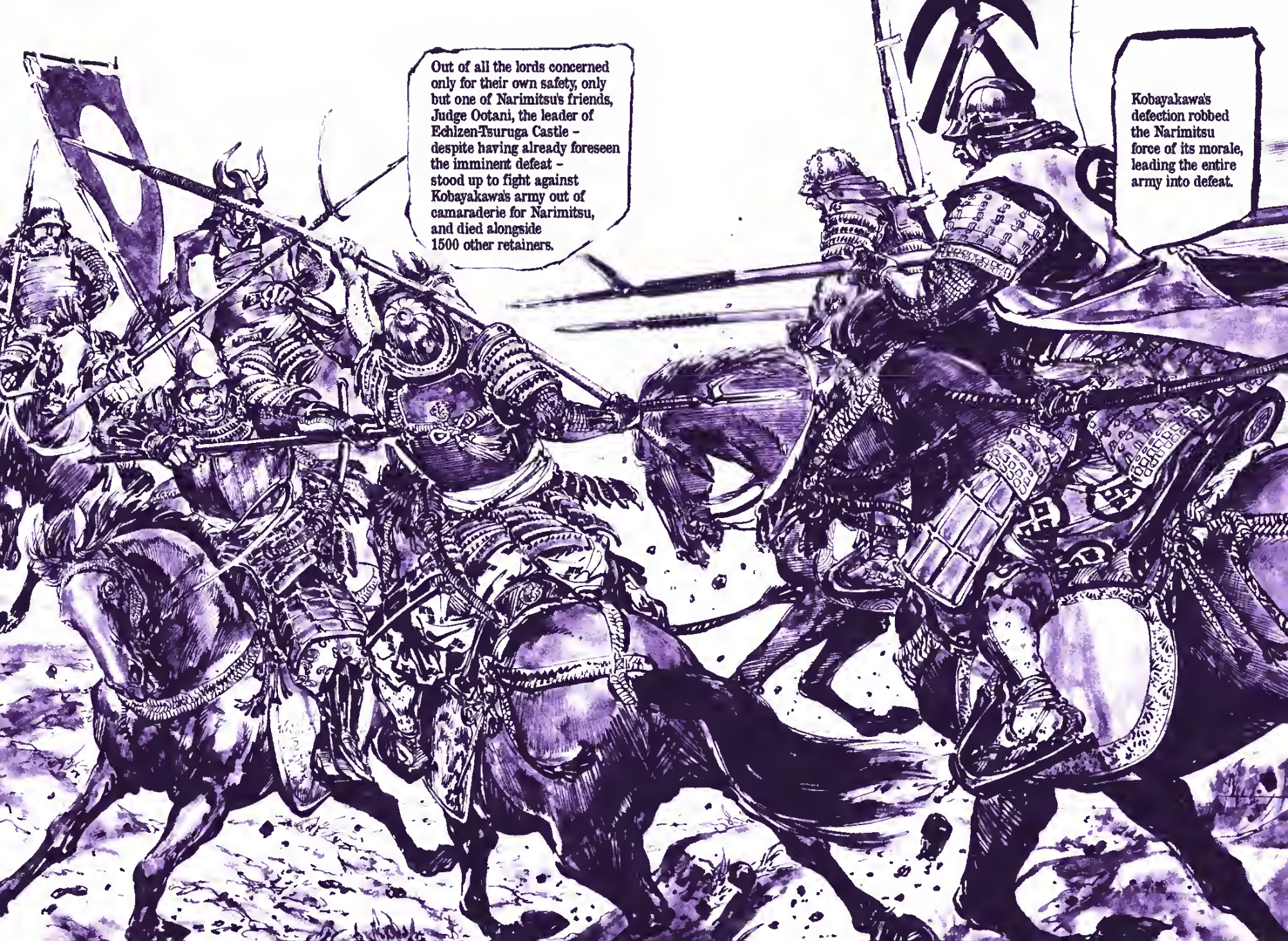
207 *T/L note: This strange name perked my curiosity, so I did some research, and here is what I found: Gratia converted to Christianity earlier in her life, so she decided to change her name to a Latin one. Ironically, she kills herself here, though... so technically she shouldn't be able to go to Heaven. Some entries on Wikipedia say she ordered someone else to kill her so that she would be able to go, however...

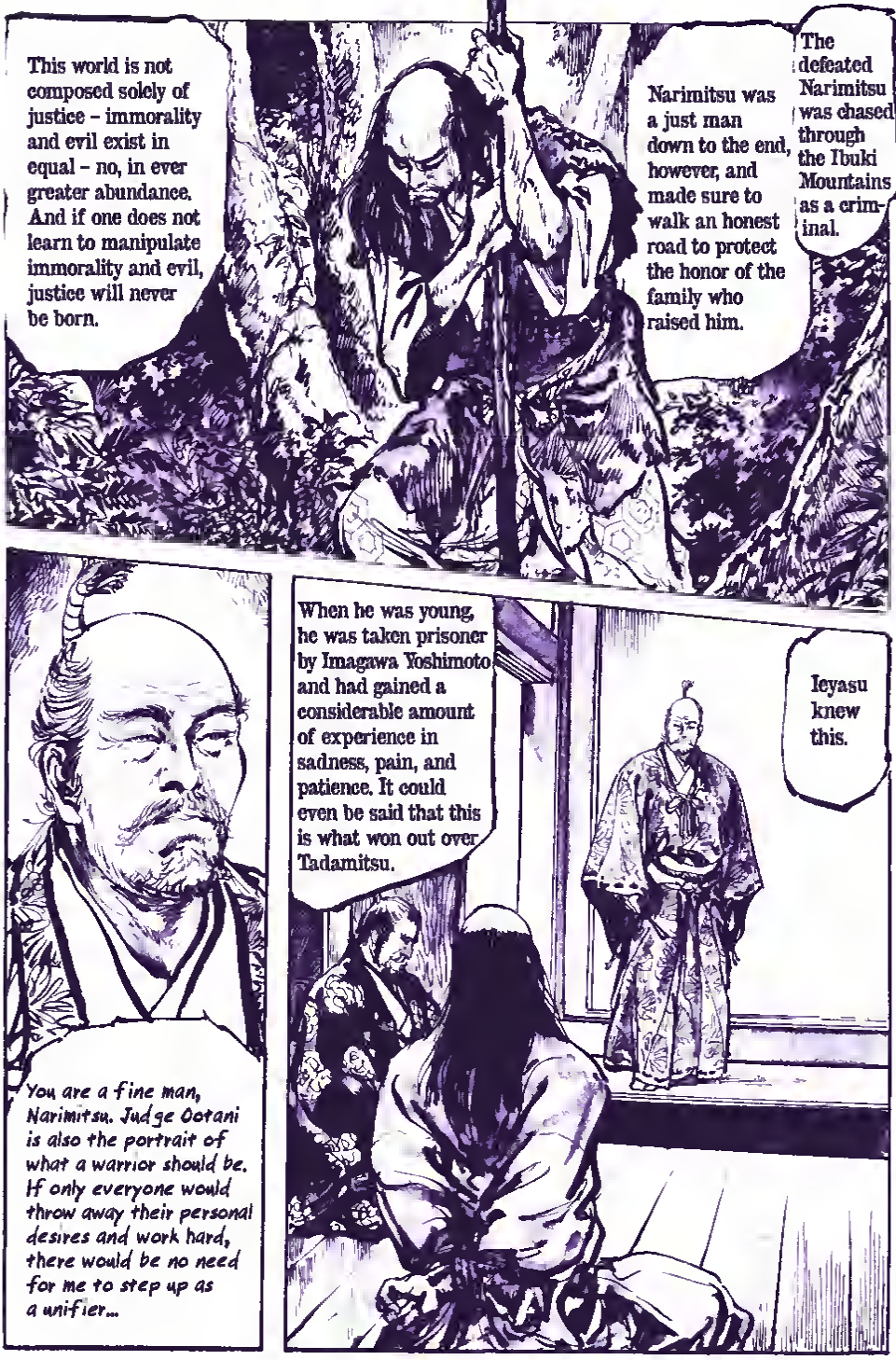
Narimitsu's hostage plan was a complete failure. Despite having overthrown Fushimi Castle, Ieyasu's estate, the castles of his allies began falling one by one, beginning with Gifu Castle.
Once they found out, the seven generals grew enraged, then suddenly turned on Ishida and began an all-out attack on his forces!
The leaders of the castles who he believed to be his allies were the first to revolt, proof that conditions had gotten so bad that they had no choice but to turn against Narimitsu.

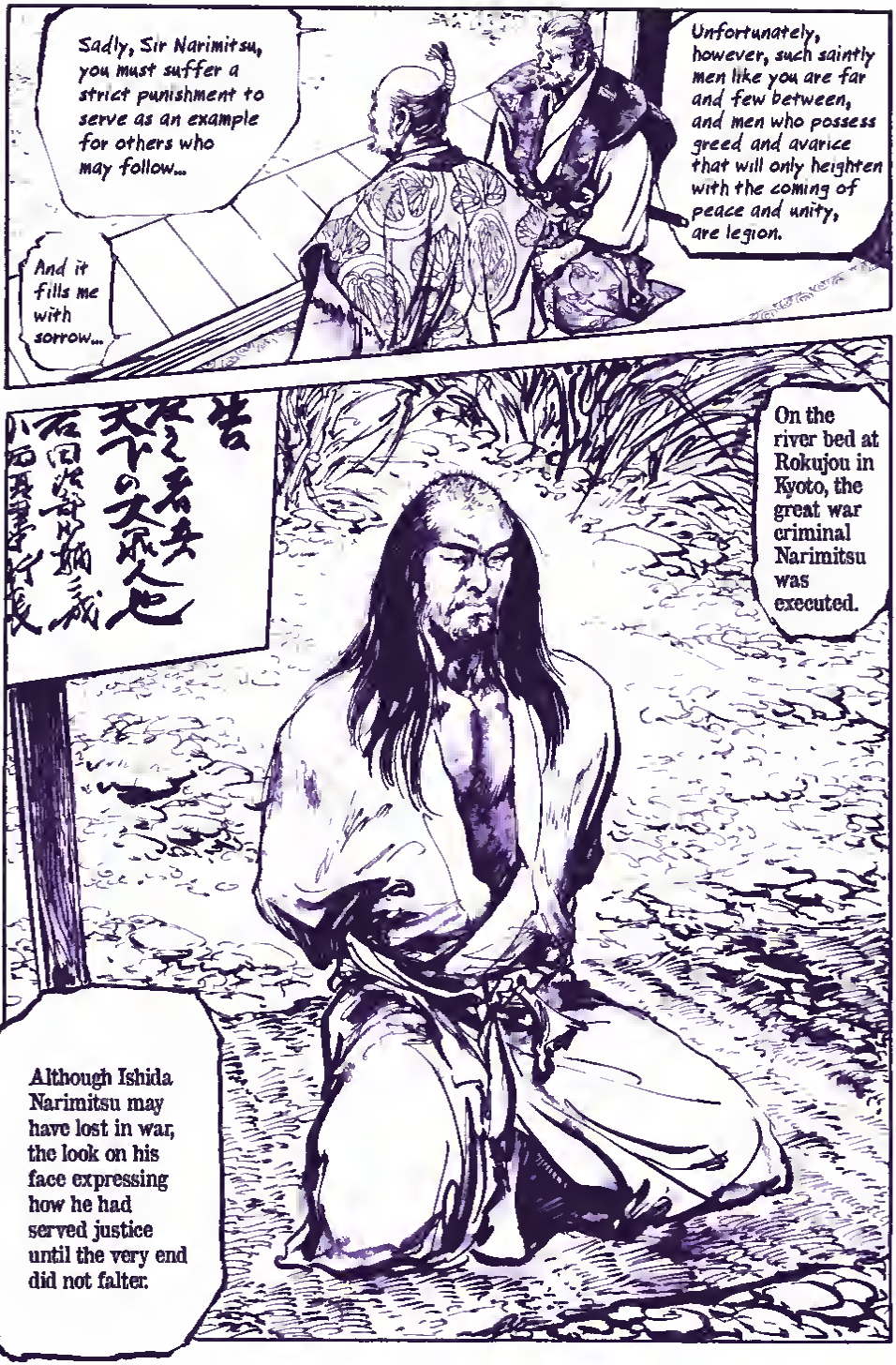

Then finally, the stage moved to Sekigahara, and it became time to deal the finishing blow.
At first, Narimitsu had a wealth of lords at his disposal. But as time went on, and conditions worsened, it became harder and harder to truly pinpoint people he could count on.
When it was time to assemble, there were many lords who, worrying about the safety of their own men, chose to meet at places far from the designated point. They had decided the only two viable options now were to either ally with the winning side, or simply do nothing until the battle was over.
Despite having over 200,000 men present out of both the eastern and western armies combined, the true number of men who actually fought in the war was only about half that amount. This was, of course, due to concern for the safety of 'one's own house.'

and Hideyoshi's brother-in-law's child Kobayakawa Hideaki's army merely stood on their hill and watched the events unfold.
Neither did Shimazu,
but refused to move Mouri's massive force at all.
The Supreme Commander of the Narimitsu army was one of the Five Elders, Mouri Terumoto. Terumoto remained in Osaka Castle, however, and was not present at the battle. The Elder Kikkawa Furue was acting in his place.
Everyone should be feeling deep gratitude toward Toyotomi! Why won't they fight to protect his legacy, then?! The traitor Ieyasu is drunk on ambition! How can they let him do as he pleases?!
Narimitsu began to panic. If only everyone would move like they were supposed to, victory would be absolute!
We have the greater number here! And yet... no one will move!

We're sick of looking at that arrogant fool!
No one really wanted to let Ieyasu do as he pleased, but the men of Mouri knew that if the conceited Narimitsu won, he would only look further down on their lord.
If we win, he said he would appoint me as Chief Advisor to the Emperor as well as make me a cabinet minister in the government, but I just know he still plans to walk above me even after all that!
The Kobayakawa name might not be directly related to Toyotomi, but his blood is running through my veins! And yet, that bastard Narimitsu not only failed to appoint me as Supreme Commander, but continually dares to order me around like he is somehow my superior! This is outrageous!
He may have found a plan that was capable of victory, but Narimitsu did not possess a heart of the same potential.
The great Kobayakawa soon sided with Tokugawa.
Narimitsu's over-reliance on rationality and logic had deprived him of the emotion and warmth needed to connect with people.


Out of all the lords concerned only for their own safety, only but one of Narimitsu's friends, Judge Ootani, the leader of Echizen-Tsuruga Castle – despite having already foreseen the imminent defeat – stood up to fight against Kobayakawa's army out of camaraderie for Narimitsu, and died alongside 1500 other retainers.
Kobayakawa's defection robbed the Narimitsu force of its morale, leading the entire army into defeat.


This world is not composed solely of justice – immorality and evil exist in equal – no, in ever greater abundance. And if one does not learn to manipulate immorality and evil, justice will never be born.
Narimitsu was a just man down to the end, however, and made sure to walk an honest road to protect the honor of the family who raised him.
The defeated Narimitsu was chased through the Ibuki Mountains as a criminal.
You are a fine man, Narimitsu. Judge Ootani is also the portrait of what a warrior should be. If only everyone would throw away their personal desires and work hard, there would be no need for me to step up as a unifier...
When he was young, he was taken prisoner by Imagawa Yoshimoto and had gained a considerable amount of experience in sadness, pain, and patience. It could even be said that this is what won out over Tadamitsu.
Ieyasu knew this.


Sadly, Sir Narimitsu, you must suffer a strict punishment to serve as an example for others who may follow...
And it fills me with sorrow...
Unfortunately, however, such saintly men like you are far and few between, and men who possess greed and avarice that will only heighten with the coming of peace and unity, are legion.
On the river bed at Rokujou in Kyoto, the great war criminal Narimitsu was executed.
Although Ishida Narimitsu may have lost in war, the look on his face expressing how he had served justice until the very end did not falter.

真の天才

池上遼一

最初に僕が日の丸文庫にマンガを持ち込んだとき、たまたまそこに平田先生がいらっしゃったんですよ。その時僕は十七歳で、平田先生は二四ぐらいだったはずですが、落ち着いた物腰でもう大御所という雰囲気でした。僕は平田先生の作品はもちろん読んでましたし、特に「つんではくずし」「血だるま剣法」にはものすごく感動して、ファンだったので緊張してね。平田先生はパラパラっと僕の原稿を見てくれて「君、才能あるよ」って言って下さったんです。「平田先生に褒められた！」ってすごく嬉しかったことを覚えてます。その時持ち込んだのは「魔剣小太刀」というタイトルで、初めて描いた作品でした。当時平田先生も執筆されていた短編誌「魔像」に採用されたその作品が、僕のデビュー作になったんです。

平田先生と直接お会いしたのは結局その一回だけです。読者として作品を読んでいて勝手に先生のイメージを膨らませていたんですが、実際にお会いして思いのほか若かったので意外に思いました。

平田先生のお話作りで凄いところは、人間心理をとことんまで突きつめて描くってところですね。だから今読んでもまったく古びていないんです。それは昔の作品から一貫してますね。「血だるま剣法」のこれでもかってぐらいの極端な設定にしても、今でも読めるのは主人公の心理をあそこまで掘り下げて描いているからこそですよ。

「つんではくずし」の絵柄にしても、この頃もうすでにスタイルとしては完成されてますよね。キャラクターの細かい表情、目つき、つをとっても、その中にまさに日本的な美学が現われてますよね。表情がとにかく美しいんですよ。

一ファンとして言わせていただければ、タランティーノに是非「血だるま剣法」とか「つんではくずし」を映画化して欲しいなと思いますね。「キル・ビル」なんか見てても、この人が平田先生の作品を読んだら絶対気に入るはずだと思いますから。日本人的な視点ではなくて、タランティーノみたいに純粋なエンタテインメントとして平田作品を捉え直したらまた違った魅力が引きだせるんじゃないですかね。「ラスト・サムライ」よりも絶対面白いものになりますよ。

今回の収録作品では「始末妻」がものすごく印象に残ってますね。あの、ワキガがものすごく強い女性の話。話としては大袈裟で、いくらなんでもこんなことは実際にはないだろうと思うんですが（笑）、平田先生のペンで描かれるとリアルに感じてしまうんですよ。説得力があるんですね。

「誰も戦い望まぬけれど」の頃の絵は力が入ってますね。当時平田先生は四十代ですよね。「薩摩義士伝」とかあの時期の絵は本当に最高です。馬の表情の描写一つにしても、平田先生ほどカッコよく描ける人はいません。挿絵系の人がいくら馬をカッコよく描いても僕はあんまり魅力を感じないんですが、平田先生はホントにみずみずしい躍動感があるんです。ご本人は本当は電気関係に行きたかったとか、「劇画を描くのは好きではない」といつも言ってらっしゃるようですが、そういう人の描く絵ではないですよこれは（笑）。同じ絵描きとして、僕なんかとても信じられません。

やっぱり天才ですね、平田先生は。僕なんかがおいそれと語れないぐらい、本当にすごい人だと思います。（談）

同時代評

平田弘史論

石子順造

下級の武士を主人公にして、武士道を描かせれば平田弘史に並ぶものはないとは、いわゆる劇画界の通念である。そのことにとりわけて異議申し立てをするつもりもないが、ぼくの意見はいささか違う。ぼくなりの感想は、すでに小著『現代マンガの思想』（太平出版社）で述べたが、およそつぎのようなものである。

平田は、自分の作品のテーマを「封建制度と権力の社会の中で、血まみれの宿命に生きる武士道」と、説明している。だがぼくが、どす黒い怨念をぬりこめたような男性的な描線と残酷な場面の描写から感知するものは、〈道〉というよりは、むしろ武士という名のもとに生きねばならない生活者の生気地であり、それこそ文字どおり必死のあらがいのさまである。平田作品の主人公である武士は、いつも剛直な気迫に満ち満ちながら、あまりにも悲運で、貧しい生活者なのである。彼は誇りとともに、血と垢にまみれて死んでいく。

その点を、『それがし乞食にあらず』という代表的な短編に見てみよう。これは平田自身も会心の作の一つに数えているものであり、ぼくも、平田が健康を害して一年半近く休養するまでの作家活動を集約する秀作とみなしている。

主人公は、三両一人扶持の足軽、緒方半兵衛である。半兵衛は、六番目の子どもがまだ乳をはなれない時期に、妻に病死された。同じ組員のうち何人かが、子どもを引き取ろうと申し出るのだが、半兵衛は、世話をかけたくない、自分でみる、と断わる。妻の葬儀も、半兵衛が自分で死骸をかついで埋めにいった。彼は、けんめいに内職にはげむが、借金で手もとには残らない。庭でとれたわずかな野菜だけしか食べさせてもらえない子どもたちは、乳のみ児をはじめとして、つぎつぎに死んでいく。半兵衛は、野良犬を斬り、首を落として肉をとる。子どもたちは、犬とは知らずに喜んで食べるのだった。しかし近所の人が食物をわけ与え、子どもたちがもらい受けようとすると、彼は激怒する。おまえたちは乞食ではないのだ、となりつけ、食物を与えようとした人には、緒方家は乞食ではないのだから、食物を与えるなどということは遠慮されたい、ときつく申し入れる。

まもなくカゼがもとで五番目の女の子が死に、男の子の一人も、八百屋でミカンを盗み、店のものに追われる途中で川に落ちて死んだ。貧弱な妻の墓石の前に、小さな小石が三つ並ぶことになった。組員たちは、半兵衛が残った二人の子を斬ってしまうのではないかと憂慮するが、どうすることもできない。

半兵衛は、大刀を手にし、「これぱっかりは売れぬのだーっ」、と苦悶している。そしてつぎのコマでは、母の墓前の小石は六つ。藩の目付は、あまりにもかたくなな半兵衛を尋ねた。彼は、家具一つない土間にごう然とすわり、内職の道具が散らばっている間で、野菜とねずみの食事をしているところだった。目付の問いに、半兵衛

は、組頭である相良源左衛門の祖父が、すぐる戦いのおり、主家を裏切り、そのために多くの同胞が死ぬことになったが、そんな相良家の援助は受けられない、と答えるのだ。目付は、しかし現在の相良源左衛門が裏切ったわけではないのに、といい、それにしても、子どもを殺さざるをえないほど窮しながら、生きながらえる目的がわからない、と重ねてたずねる。半兵衛の答えは、こうであった。ここで自分が死んでは、主家になんのご恩返しもできない。このままでは緒方家は、まるで乞食だ。なんらかの形で、主家に報じる機会をえたいのだ、と。

半兵衛の真意が伝わると、相良源左衛門は身のせまい思いをさせられた。そして、半兵衛をさか恨みするようになる。一年後、半兵衛は、源左衛門が差し向けた刺客に両手両足を切断され、だるまのようになって生きていた。這いつくばって、腕の中にじかに顔をつっこんで食う病み衰えた武士。相良源左衛門は、そんな半兵衛を見て笑う。もうおまえには主君への御恩報じもできまい、さぞ口惜しいことだろう、と。半兵衛は、「まだ……その志を……果たすことは、で……き……も……う……す……」、ときれぎれにいうのだった。あんなからだでなにができるものか、と思いながら、源左衛門は、執念ともいうべき半兵衛の意中を察しかねて気味が悪くなってしまう。

自分一人では大小もできぬ男の、主家への御恩報じは、日を経ずして彼が絶命したときに果たされるのだ。緒方家の持ち物として残されたたった一本の大刀の鞘の中から、一葉の紙片が落ちた。半兵衛の遺書であった。

緒方家は、三両一人扶持を五十八年間頂戴してきた。これは総計で二九二石、一石一両として二九二両に相当する。この刀は、安くても六百両はするはず。主家への御礼として、せめてこの刀を捧げたい。このようなふるまいは、君臣の関係を打算的なものとする心ない行為ではあるが、「不幸にして御馬前に一身をもって働く機会なく死する場合の、せめての御恩報じとしてなすものなればなり」。鑑定家によれば、時価八百両の名刀であった。藩士たちが、半兵衛の「忠誠心厚き」ことに今さらのように心うたれたとき、真相はは っきりしなかったものの半兵衛をたるまのようなみじめな姿に追いこんだ張本人と目された相良源左衛門が、下城の帰途、何者かの手にかかって斬られていた。しかし源左衛門を斬ったのがだれであるかを、人は捜そうともしなかった……。

直接作品を読めばわかるストーリーを、いささかながながと説明したが、とくに他意はない。この作品は昨年のはじめ、『サンデー毎日』の増刊号に発表されたものであり、ほかに再録されていないので、今日ではめったに読み直すことができないし、わずか二十四ページの短編だが、密度の高いもので、くわしく伝えたかったまでである。

けずった板をきっちり積み重ねて背負い、不幸なつら構えの裏に沈痛なかげりを宿した筋骨たくましい武士が、今屋敷を歩み出たところを描写したとびらでこの作は始まる。第一コマは、「泣くでないっ！」としかる半兵衛の顔のクローズ・アップ。力感のある筆触を残した鋭い線で描かれた顔は、太く迫った眉の間にしわをよせ、大きな目を向いて食いつかんばかりの口。頬が落ち、首すじへとったわるまばらな無精ひげに乱髪がかかり、がっしりとしまった顎。この主人公の顔だけを描いた細長く小さな一コマには、すでに以後の劇が集約されているようなすさまじさが感じられた。また、右手

で大刀を振り上げ、力いっぱい峰打ちをしている半兵衛、〝ギャー〟という叫び声のコマがあって、そのつぎに犬の首を切り落としている血だらけの場面。

あらあらしさのなかに、ひしと秘められた情感を、残してぼくらを引きつけるものは、はたして「封建社会と権力の社会の中で、血まみれの宿命に生きる武士道」のきびしさであったろうか？　そうではない、といいきってはまた的はずれになってしまうようにも思うが、より直接的には、どんなに身をついやしても、最後まで何者かでありつづけようとする人間の意地と、その意地にしがみついて耐え、そしてその意地ゆえに死んでいかなければならない、気も狂わんばかりの人間の生き方＝死にざま、ではなかったろうか。

『それがし乞食にあらず』という題名に示された緒方半兵衛の「武士道」とは、いったい何であったのか？　半兵衛は、もはや自分は乞食ではない、このままでは緒方家は乞食に堕してしまう、そうしてはならない、という否定形によってしか、自分が武士であり、武士の家系であるという誇りを保つことができないでいる。代々仕えた主君に御恩報じをしたいという一念も、ひたすら乞食になってしまう＝武士ではなくなってしまう、という理論、というよりは論理によってのみ支えられている。子どもの寝顔を見てちゅうちょした彼も、最後には三人の子を斬ってしまう。それもこれも、ただ一つ、なんらかの形で主人の恩に報いたいというエゴイスティソクなまでの執念である。平田は、いっそう執念を、非人間的なもの、「封建社会と権力の社会」の必然として否定的に描いているのだろうか。この点は、たしかにちがう。平田は、明らかに緒方半兵衛の生き方＝死にさまに同情し、共鳴している。結末を読めば、そのことはすぐに知れよう。つまり平田は、武士道を、下級武士という貧窮な生活者の生活倫理の基軸にすえてとらえ返しているのであり、武士という封建社会における身分制とか、階級性とかを対象化しようと試みてはいない。いいかえればここで武士道とは、一つの宗教的な信奉に近く、人間のモラルの位相に奪還されている。さらにいえば、平田にとっては、主人公は、武士でなくてもよかったのではないか。武士でなくても、自分自身の体内に、人間として生きていくことの矜持を深く抱きつづけ、どのような困苦にも負けなかった男の無残さを、無残ではあっても、それだけきびしく人間のものであったとして肯定していくことが問題であったにちがいない、とぼくは思う。緒方半兵衛にそくしていえば、人からもらい物を受け、裏切り者を出した家系の組頭の援助にすがるのは、乞食になる＝武士でなくなる＝人間でなくなる、ということなのである。そんなのはおかしい、といってみてもはじまらない。緒方半兵衛にとってそれがそれなりにまったく正当であったように武士道とはいわず、だれにも、これ以下は、自分が人間であることを見失ってしまうことになるのではないかという、最低線の矜持が、意地と呼んでもいいだろうが、あるのではなかろうかと平田は問いつめているのだろう。それが、静的というにはあまりにも生活のなかで具体的に、利己的というにもあまりにも自己否定的（あるいは自滅的）な様相として、サディスティックに描かれる緊張感が、平田作品の魅力であった、といえそうである。

そして、それにしても、平田は、なぜ男しか描かないのだろうか、とぼくはときどき不思議な気がしていた。なにも女を描くべきだ、といいたいのではない。そうではなく、母や妻や、女の子とのかかわりを通じてだって男は描けるだろうに、平田が題材に選ぶものは、いつもきまって男同士の信義であり友愛であり敵意であり克己

心であって、男の心のなかの、男としての人間らしさへの意志と努力であった。たとえば『それがし乞食にあらず』の緒方半兵衛にしても、要すなわち子どもたちの母への思いなどはまったく見当たらず、まるで妻を持ったことのない男親のように描かれている。最低限人間（＝武士）であることを守り抜こうとする半兵衛の自己へのあらがいのなかで、妻なり性は、どのようなものとしてあったか、とぼくは思わないわけにはいかなかった。

『それがし乞食にあらず』を発表してから半年ほど後に、平田は『憂憎父子挽歌』（旧作を手直ししたもので、『週刊女性』に発表。昭和四五年八月作。四六年一〇月『無双奥儀太刀』と改題して『長編漫画傑作集』に再録）を描いた。これはかなりの長編だったが、作品の性格は、『それがし乞食にあらず』と同じ系列のものである。五人の子どもを抱えた貧乏な浪人者が、妻と上から三人までの子を貧しさゆえの病気で失い、一家心中を決意しながら果たさず、内職をして生きのびる。残された男の子一人に剣の奥儀を伝え、今一人には学問をさせようというのだった。だが一度見すてかかった子が、自分より、もっと若く貧しい浪人者に拾われて、養育されようとしているのを知って恥じた彼、武左衛門は、その若い浪人が恥辱のなかで死に、残された老人と妻子がさらなる極貧にあえいでいるのを知ってつじ斬りを行なうのである。そのつじ斬りを二人の息子に悟られて……とストーリーは展開し、父は下の息子に奥儀を伝えてわざと斬られ、病をえていた兄も、弟に斬られて死ぬ。そして弟は、結婚も栄達もあきらめて消息をたつ、というものであった。この作品にも、女はわずかに登場はするものの、ほんのそえ物にすぎない。

女を描かずとも、平田の作品のマチエールは官能的とすらいえるのであり、ぼくは、返り血を浴びつつ、はったとぼくら読者をにらみすえるような男の目の光りと、血がしたたっている日本刀の刃先の鋭さに、かゆくてたまらぬ皮膚を一気にむしりとってしまうような、ある種の快感を覚えずにはおれなかった。

一年半近くしてふたたび筆をとりだした今年の五月から、平田の作家活動はおよそ一ヵ月に一作である。すなわちこの九月までに四作品が生まれたが、それらを通じてみると、平田のなかにも、ようやくわずかながら一つの転機がうかがえる。平たくいうと性的なものへの関心と、いっそう過激なサディズム的気配である。

復帰第一作『不承知槍』（四六年五月、別冊『アサヒ芸能』、後に前掲『長編漫画傑作集』に再録）が、まずそうした印象を与えた。

日和佐家は、殿様から双子の一人源三郎をあずかっていた。源三郎は、日和佐家の母を犯し、自害してしまった後に、殿様が後妻としてつかわせた女性・綾をも強引にわが物にしてしまう。日和佐家の主人は、殿様から拝領した槍をたいせつにし、息子真吾にも、ひたすら耐えろと教える。源三郎は、綾と自分との間にできた幼な子を、いたずらみたいに射殺し、日陰者の子の命を絶つのは親の情けだと高笑いする。そして挙式直前の真吾の許婚までも犯してしまう。たまりかねた真吾も、縁者や同輩から、主家存続のために耐えろ、と押さえられる。源三郎と、双子であった主君も死亡し、源三郎は殿様になり、かって放題に振舞う彼は、こううそぶく。「政事はすべて重臣共がやる。俺は奉り上げられた道具だわ！」、「家、家、家とお家大切にいかなる仕打ちにあおうとも耐えていく！」、「そのおろかさ！　ふぬけ共ばかりで俺はあきあきしておるわい！」。信吾は、父が拝領していた槍をもって主君源三郎に勝負を挑み、主君

を倒してその場で自らも割復して果てた。

この作品には、女を犯すシーンがいく度かあり、平田にしては珍しくコマを費して描かれている。しかし、真吾の母が短刀で首をつらぬいて自害している場面や、あやされている赤子の頭を源三郎が放った矢が射抜くコマ、そして真吾が主君源三郎の眉間を突きとおし、半月型の槍をぐいとねじって手もとに引き、顔の四分の一をスイカのようにたち割った情景のサディスティックな感興のほうがはるかに強烈であった。平田は『それがし乞食にあらず』では、犬の首を切り落とすコマのほか、主人公が腕を斬られるやはり同じくらい小さなコマ以外には、血しぶきが上がる場面を描いていなかった。ぼくは、平田が、人を斬り殺すというアクションから、より精神的な葛藤のドラマに移行しつつあるのか、とも当時感じた。しかし近作では、殺し方がいちだんとものすごく描かれているようで、ぼくの感想はとり消さねばならないようである。『不承知槍』に次いで発表された『介錯』（同年七月、『土曜漫画』）にも、人を介錯するための剣技を修得するために、十日間で五十匹の犬猫を斬るとか、斬った犬の首が飛んできて腕に食らいついたら、その犬に噛みつけ、と教えるところとか、相当ものすごい場面がある。また戦国時代、戦場で殺されそうになった武士が、相手に金銭を支払う約束手形を発行して命を助けてもらい、後日その手形の支払いをめぐって展開される『約束手形』（同年八月、『コミック・マガジン』）の結末は、両手を失った武士が相手の首すじに噛みつき、相手は噛みつかれたまま頭に刀を突き刺して相討ちになるといった決闘であった。『介錯』や『約束手形』では、女性はほとんどなんの役割も与えられていない。

ところが、ぼくのこの小文が活字になる予定の時期に重なって発売されるはずの、『漫画フレッシュ』十二月号では、女性二人に大きくスペースがさかれている。『仕末妻』がその作品の題名だが、原稿の段階で読ませてもらったストーリーは、およそつぎのようなものである。

主人公はやはり武士で、名は笹原源三郎。彼は、拝領妻の子で、小泉二万石の主君と、義兄弟であると風評されている。その彼には、結婚を寸前にした許婚者で、緒方半兵衛（『それがし乞食にあらず』の主人公と同じ名まえだが、むろんなんの関係もない）の娘・楓がいる。にもかかわらず、彼は隣藩の姫君初と結婚しなければならなくなった。というのは、初は当初小泉家の主君が嫁にするはずだったが、初姫にはもうれつな体臭があり、主君が結婚をいやがったからだ。源三郎はいったん初と結婚し、すぐ初を斬って、三年たったら楓を迎えにくると誓う。

源三郎と初姫との結婚式は、一応とどこおりなく終わった。しかし、妻として抱かれることもないのに、いかにもけなげな初を見て、源三郎は斬りかねていた。するとある日、楓が自害した、と知らされる。楓の四十九日が終えたころ、源三郎は自ら刀で鼻をつぶし、包帯をまいたまま、初に、「姫、参られい」、という。なんのことやらわからず、それでも体臭が強くてとても男性に抱かれることなどありえないと思っていた初は、おそれ驚きながらだかれた。

同じころ、楓の墓から楓の首がなくなっているのを緒方家が知り、その犯人が源三郎らしいとわかる。楓の兄は、首を返せと源三郎に迫る。彼は緒方半兵衛に意中を話し、「いずれ斬らせる」と、約束した。

そうこうしているうちに、小泉家の藩主が死んでしまった。じつは源三郎が非番のさいに、ひそかに山から取ってきた毒キノコが原

因なのだが、だれにもそれは知られない。重臣たちは、風評をいいことに、源三郎を新しい藩主にすえる。源三郎は重臣たちに血判をとり、今はすっかり彼の妻になった初の体臭を、どんなことをしても取りのぞく、と宣言する。つぎつぎに諸国から名医が呼ばれるが、初のものすごい体臭は消えない。あるオランダの医者が、オランダまで行けば直せようという。源三郎は、オランダまで航海できる船の建造を命じた。重臣たちが反対すれば、血判を理由に獄に投じ、初の体臭がしみついた衣服をなげこんで半ば狂い死にさせてしまう。いよいよ船ができてオランダへの門出の日、源三郎は藩士たちに財産のすべてをわかち与えて港へ向かう。そして船を目前にして、楓の弟・啓二郎の手にかかって死ぬ。初もまた、その死体に重なって自害して果てる。初の部屋には、酒漬けになった楓の首と、つぎのようにしたためられた短冊が二葉残されていた。

「恋実らさば　姫様悲し　楓」

「二方に仕えん　あの世にて　初」

つまり楓は、自分の望みをかなえようとすれば初姫を殺さなければならないことを悲しんで死に、初は、そのことを知っていて「二方に仕えん」といったのであろう。源三郎は国禁を犯してまでオランダに行けるとは思っていなかったろうが、初に夢を与えてやりたかったのだろうし、主君が死んだとき、すでに小泉藩は亡びていたのだから、重臣たちのでっち上げを巧妙に利用することを、楓の父・緒方半兵衛にもらしたのにちがいないのである。『仕末妻』とは、あの世で「二方に仕えん」という初の気持ちをいう題名でもあったのだろうか。

自分の鼻をそぎ落とした源三郎が、「姫参られい」と命ずるようにいったとき、源三郎の胸中には、どのような憤怒と痛苦が性的な欲望を通底としてあったのだろう。この作品は昭和四十四年の旧作に倍以上の手を加えた五十九ページだが、どうも物語を追うのに忙しく心的なドラマが描ききれずに訴感に物足りなさが残る。平田は、ほとんど初めてといっていいほど、女二人に主要な役割を与え、性描写もしているのだが、じゅうぶん成功しているとはいえない。なにも性が描けなければ、ほんとうの人間が描けないというのではないが、彼の作品に一番欠けている要素がその点であることもたしかである。平田は、そういったぼくの質問に、今まであまり意識したことはないけど、近ごろのマンガに性描写がはんらんしているのを見ると、描く気がしなくなる、と答えた。〝そりゃ、おかしいヨ。じゃあ、あんたは性描写に自信がないんだ。それよりやはり描きたいと思ってなかったんだろうけどネ……〟、とそのときぼくはいったと思う。そして、またしてもなぜ描きたいと思わなかったのか、と自問してみたのだった。平田弘史の過去を聞いているうちに、ぼくの自問はいくらか解けかかってきた。

昭和一二年の二月、東京で生まれた平田弘史（本名は弘）は、八歳のとき奈良県に疎開し、そこで敗戦を迎える。父は、暖冷房関係の装置の仕事をやっており、彼も九歳から手伝った。そして十七歳で、父を失う。六人兄弟の長男。母をふくめて彼は、一家を支える。しかし父から引きついだ仕事は、二十歳のとき彼自身が悪性の盲腸を患った時期に放棄せざるをえなくなった。彼は天理教の信者であった母親に勧められて入信した。やがて、やはり暖冷房装置の会社に勤め出したが、たまたま天理中学時代の上級生であった宮地正弘氏のすすめで、貸本向けのマンガを描く気になった。それが当時創刊された日の丸文庫『魔像』第四号に掲載された処女作『愛憎必殺

剣』（十六ページ）である。それから自分に今金をかせぐ方法はこれしかないと心にきめ、勤め先をやめて、わずかな道具を売り払い、背水の陣でマンガに専念する。

当時の貸本向けのマンガは、一ページ二百円とか三百円であり、出版社も出版社といえないほど小さなものであった。裸電球と土間に象徴される貸本店は、戦後日本の活孤づきの《復興と繁栄》過程におけるゴキブリのようなものであり、そこへ向けての労働条件の劣悪さは、いまだにほとんどの劇画家たちの口からひとしく聞ける。

この世の苦楽は前世の因縁と説く天理教の教えと、なんとしても家族を養わなければならなかった青年平田が自から趣く表現が、どす黒い怨念をこめた下級武士の、生活者としての必死のあらがいのさまであったとしても不思議ではなかったとは思えないだろうか。

彼にとっては身体的な感応すらも、マンガを描くというその行為のなかの心性に凝縮されざるをえず、意識するとしないとにかかわらず、描きたいものを描こうとするとき血しぶきが飛び散る凄惨な死の形相に、性＝生が投影されていく。

いいかえれば、生そのものがサディスティックなのである。

宿命といって受容しようとする生きることの重要の痛覚は、逆にはげしく内に向かって渦動する欲望の不条理性に火をつけ、生命を絶つという手ごたえのなかによみがえってくる。

一刀のもとに相手を切り裂く気迫に満ちた実感は、平田が、存在に向けて全身で発した怒号とも受けとれよう。相手を切り裂くことは、同時に自分を死にさらけることであり、それまでのいっさいの自分を、一瞬無に投与する慌惚ですらあったのではないか。それは、やはりけんめいに制御されようとするエロスへの志向であった、といえなくはない。

平田は、殺人や性行為がそれ自体完結化し、興味本位に描かれることを嫌う。彼は、マンガが好きだから描いているのではなく、たまたま生活のための手段であり、自分はいつまでも土方や水道管工、旋盤工と変わりない、という。

そのことばに、けっしてなんのふくみもてらいもないことを、ぼくはよく知っているつもりだ。彼は、それこそこれからも体力の許すかぎりマンガを描いていくだろう。

いや、より収入のよい職が見つかれば、しごくあっさりとマンガをすてるともいえる（彼は、電気関係の機械いじりが大好きなのだ）。いずれにせよ、彼は彼の生活技術に全力投球し、一面ではこれは生活のためだと醒めながら、多面では、ぎりぎりと生きることへの問いを問いつづけるにちがいない。

ぼくは、平田が、性や母を描くようになったとき、平田マンガが完成すると思う。その地点への接近は、早すぎても遅すぎてもいけないのだが。

初出『黒の手帖』（檸檬社）一九七一年十二月号
『コミック論』（喇嘛社・一九八八年十一月刊）所収

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それがし乞食にあらず

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